



Newsletter of the
Johannesburg Section

May 2005

"If I had my life to live over I'd like to make more mistakes next time. I'd relax. I would limber up. I would be sillier than I have been this trip. I would take fewer things seriously. I would take more chances. I would climb more mountains and swim more rivers. I would eat more ice cream and less beans. I would perhaps have more actual trouble, but I'd have fewer imaginary ones.

You see, I'm one of those people who live sensibly and sanely hour after hour, day after day. Oh, I've had my moments, and if I had to do it over again, I'd have more of them. In fact, I'd try to have nothing else. Just moments, one after another, instead of living so many years ahead of each day. I've been one of those persons who never goes anywhere without a thermometer, a hot water bottle, a raincoat, and a parachute.

If I had to do it again, I would travel lighter than I have. If I had my life to live over, I would start barefoot earlier in the spring and stay that way later in the fall. I would go to more dances. I would ride more merry-go-rounds. I would pick more daisies."

- Nadine Stair

1. FROM THE EDITOR

Well, it's another year for me on the committee, and it's fascinating to see how a few new faces can change the dynamics of Monday night meetings. For one, its pretty confusing with three lan's on board. Perhaps we should call them Ian, Twee, Drie. In the pervious edition, our chairman, Terry White sneaked into my usual spot, and did his best to shake us all up. We are now faced with the challenge, of how far can we take this vision in a year? A lot of introspection has taken place, as the club is finding itself in a situation which begs the question, are we really representative of climbing and mountain use in South Africa? The fact is that many of the top sport climbers in Gauteng are not members of the club, that the membership is still predominantly lily white (pink after much sun!), and that most members still think that bouldering is a form of assertive training. A lot of change needs to take place if we are to be relevant to a broader spectrum of mountain users. One of the biggest stumbling blocks is the conflict of interest, caused by the dual role that we are currently playing: as land owners with a conservation agenda, and being responsible for the promotion and development of mountain activities. A tangible example is how our membership policy is engineered towards preserving and ensuring sustainable access to climbing areas. While this policy has been quite effective in serving this purpose, it is perceived by many people outside the club, as being "exclusive". It has never been the intention of the MCSA to be an 'exclusive' club, but this branding by outsiders does exist. One of the committee's goals for the year is to investigate the possibility of changing the requirements for club membership and to try to reverse this image, by making membership more accessible to outsiders. The drive for a general increase in membership numbers, is in part motivated by the fear that despite the clubs balance sheet looking very healthy, the rift between the rate at which the club can generate revenue, and the increasing cost of land suggests that any new land purchases by the club are unlikely to occur in sought after areas. We are also facing the realisation, that the age of the selfless volunteer is almost over, and the club may soon need to start employing professionals, on a part, or full time basis to perform tasks which have previously been done by volunteers.

This rather forest unfriendly edition features information on all you need to know on the establishment of the Magaliesberg conservancy. For a change, we have lots of climbing news, and the answer to a rather slippery question!

Peter Adrian

2. LAND AND ACCESS

Bronkies crag

We have been informed by the property owner of Bronkies Crag, Mr Franse Maselele, that visitors must now go directly up to the main house to pay the parking money. Take the normal turnoff to Bronkies, after a left bend in the road, turn right down the brick driveway that leads to the top entrance of the main house. Go up to the house and someone will come out with the visitors book, and to collect the money. Exit via the lower gate then proceed on to the crag. Members are urged to take careful note of this arrangement, as we do not want to loose our access to this area.

Closing of Groblerskloof

The Laburns have finally closed off vehicle access to the top of Kloofwaters from Breed's Nek. The staff have put a locked boom on the track leading to the upper reaches of Kloofwaters, and have placed a long row of boulders across the veid to prevent 4 x 4 access to the top of the mountain. This measure has become necessary as a result of the huge increase in 4 x 4 traffic that we have seen on the farm over the last 3 years.

The Laburns have had an informal agreement with the MCSA that members may park on the farm, alongside this track, in order to access Grobler's Kloof. As Grobler's Kloof is now out of bounds for the MCSA, the closure of our jeep rack should not impact the MCSA in any way, but I wanted to reassure you that should access to Grobler's become a possibility again, Beryl does not want to exclude the MCSA from parking on the farm and we can look at some sort of arrangement to give members access when required. Brett Nicolson

Castle Gorge Parking

Members are reminded that the new parking is on the right hand side of the road before you reach the electric gate. From there proceed through the turn-stile and keep to the road, past the old parking and follow the signposts 'Castle Gorge'. Do not walk in the direction of Gavin Amos' house. Remember to get the lock code from Uschi.

PROPOSED MAGALIESBERG CONSERVANCY

There have been a lot of happenings going on behind the scenes regarding the formation of a conservancy in the Magaliesberg. MCSA properties included in the first phase, are Corderberg/Tonquani and Castle Gorge. Ultimately, a decision whether or not to join, but more realistically, at what cost, rests in the voting members hands. Since there are no designated MCSA funds budgeted to cover the expenses of joining the conservancy, a special general meeting may have to be called in the near future to vote on the clubs position. The intention of this set of articles is to provide members with background information as to the issues at stake, to promote an informed decision making process. **The final feasibility report the official standpoint of the MCSA, and an opinion by a prominent club member are included in this report.**

FINAL FEASIBILITY REPORT (abridged version)

Prepared for: World Wildlife Fund, Interim Steering Committee, Interested and Affected Parties

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INTRODUCTION

Residents, and visitors to the Magaliesberg have over many decades enjoyed the wonder and beauty of the Magaliesberg Mountain range. The co-existence of people with the area has developed a sense of place in people which has instilled a love of the land and subsequently a sense of ownership and care that has contributed to the conservation of the land for many years.

Based on all the inherent values of the Magaliesberg as well as people's sentiments on these values, the Magaliesberg is today protected by national legislation as a "Protected Natural Environment" where certain development limitations are in place for the land (Section 16 and 17 Environmental Conservation Act of 1989 Act Nr 73 of 1989). Such limitations are in support of the principle of sustainable development.

The proposed Magaliesberg conservancy initiative was initiated by landowners on the southern and northern slopes of the Magaliesberg who saw the potential of linking certain areas with each other to form one united larger conservancy. An Interim Committee of co-owners was subsequently formed to canvass the feasibility of such an initiative with fellow co-owners in the area concerned. Further steps were taken to support this initiative by procuring funding from the World Wildlife Fund of South Africa (WWF) as a result of which Eco Assessments, ecological and environmental consultants, were appointed to facilitate this process.

Conservancies have become increasingly popular in South Africa and much work has been done on this privately driven conservation initiative. In most provincial governments conservancies are represented by a specific official who would assist with the establishment of a conservancy. In the Gauteng and Kwazulu-Natal provinces, the Gauteng and Kwazulu-Natal Conservancy

associations have been formed to support existing and potential conservancy initiatives and to facilitate liaison with government on this matter.

A conservancy is defined to be a registered voluntary association between land users/landowners who cooperatively wish to manage their natural resources in an environmentally sustainable manner without necessarily changing the land-use of their properties. Conservancies were initiated in Kwazulu-Natal in 1975 and subsequently 200 conservancies have been established in this province, 188 in the eastern Free State and 32 in Gauteng. A national coordinating committee was formed in 1993 and broadened in 1994 to incorporate all nine provinces.

Study Area

The study area is located east of the town of Rustenburg, west of Pretoria and north west of Krugersdorp (Map 1) on the Magaliesberg mountain range. The following farms form a part of the Conservancy: Kromrivier 347JQ, Grootfontein 346JQ, Buffelsfontein 344JQ, Tonquani 351JQ, Buffelshoek 468JQ, Elandskraal 469JQ, Elandskraal 470JQ, Buffelsfontein 485JQ, Hartebeesfontein 472JQ, Doornhoek 392JQ and Nooitgedacht 471JQ. The total extent of the proposed conservancy is approximately 10240 ha.

APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

The steps proposed for this Conservancy initiative include: a (1) Feasibility Study, (2) Specialist investigations, and (3) Implementation. This document reports on stage 1. Stage 2 –3 will be undertaken following consensus among the landowners.

Stage 1 – Feasibility Assessment

This process was intended to bring all Interested and Affected parties (I&AP's) together to determine opportunities and constraints in establishing a Conservancy. To allow them to determine a common vision for the area as well as goals to attain the vision. This stage which is nearing completion further provides principles and establishes a framework to which the Conservancy will have to adhere to in order to allow for sustainable development.

Stage 2 – Specialist investigations

In this stage, specific issues raised in the feasibility stage will be addressed and alternative solutions investigated and presented to landowners. Some formal environmental impact assessments will also be considered depending on the alternatives proposed by landowners and interested and affected parties. A draft constitution, business plan and ecological management plan will also form part of this phase. Additional interaction with landowners will take place in order to address concerns and requirements.

Stage 3 - Implementation

In this stage, the plans and programs drawn up in Stage 2 will be implemented. In all three of the above stages, a steering committee will continue to oversee the various activities.

SECTION 1 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS

As per current environmental policy and legislation concerning plans affecting the public, a database was compiled of all relevant Interested and Affected Parties (I&AP's). The I&AP's were given a Background Information Document (BID) containing the definition of a conservancy, advantages of a conservancy, broad steps to establish a conservancy, preliminary objectives for the larger Magaliesberg Conservancy, the processes that will be followed during the feasibility study, the Interim Steering Committee and an invitation to the first landowners meeting. In addition, they received a questionnaire on issues and concerns relating to the establishment of a conservancy. This was followed by a landowners meeting in April 2004 to discuss the issues and concerns raised and a second meeting was held in October 2004, to provide feedback on the issues investigated, and to allow further comment. The Interim Steering Committee that drives and steers the process consist of Adv Francois Junod S.C. (Chairman), Roelof van Wyk (Elandskraal), Peter Bulterman (Hartebeesfontein), Thys Maritz (Buffelshoek), Gerhard Venter & Andries Lategan (Mountain Club of SA), Owen Sutton (Grootfontein), Chris Williams (Magaliesberg Protection Association) and Ken Dalgleish (Jhb Hiking Club).

SECTION 2 VISION, OBJECTIVES, OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS OF ESTABLISHING A CONSERVANCY IN THE MAGALIESBERG

Vision

"To protect and manage the area as a consolidated natural area, whereby the indigenous fauna and flora that are presently naturally occurring, or have naturally occurred in the area in the past, will be enhanced and maintained, while the ecological, social and economic values and benefits of the area will be protected not only for our present generation but also for those generations still to come."

Objectives

Conserve and improve the natural fauna and flora of the Magaliesberg

Provide opportunities for improved environmental awareness of landowners, land users and visitors to the area

- Protect the area from over-commercialisation
- Control access onto the area
- Re-establish game that was previously in the area
- Harness owner resources to establish and maintain cost-efficient and sustainable conservation strategies
- Conserve agricultural land
- Conserve water resources
- Provide an eco-tourism destination
- Remove internal fences
- Prohibit any form of hunting

Key issues

Several issues listed below may warrant further discussion and negotiation as these issues may represent different groups with differing values.

Area affected

Most of the farms affected are located either completely or at least partially in the proclaimed Magaliesberg Protected Natural Environment (MPNE) and cover approximately 10 240 ha. Most land owners affected are in support of the conservancy. In principal, the larger the area of connected land, the more productive and sustainable the natural eco-system.

The nature of the conservancy

The overall response to a conservancy, including one which includes game was very positive. Issues and concerns were raised, and there are to be incorporated in a constitution in which activities and land management can be controlled.

Access control

Access onto private land was raised as an important issue by some landowners, especially in the light of fences having to be taken down. Other landowners were less concerned about it. Both groups indicated that some system be developed to control access. One proposal that was put forward was that the fence posts of a specific fence be retained after the fence has been removed. The fence posts can subsequently be painted a certain colour which would be visible to neighbors and visitors to indicate where one property would end and another would start. A similar system can be utilized making use of color coded stone cairns. Different agreements can subsequently be made between landowners depending on whether access onto their land will be acceptable or not. Such agreements presently already exist in the study area. In cases where specific landowners want to retain their fences for fear of trespassing, such fences, provided they are in the form of a cattle fence only, could be retained.

Principles:

- Access onto all farms must be controlled as illegal trespassing must not be permitted;
- A system must be developed whereby the boundaries of properties are visible without fences being in place;
- A right of way will have to be agreed over properties for fire fighting as well as veld and game management purposes.

Action:

Develop a map and code/color system where boundaries will be demarcated without fencing involved. Distribute the map between conservancy members and landowners.

Representative Steering Committee

The establishment of a Steering Committee to replace the present Interim Steering Committee will be the next step in providing appropriate management infrastructure for the proposed conservancy. The steering committee should allow for different interest groups to be involved in the conservancy. At present the following groups are known to be directly and indirectly involved: public, landowners, land users, people renting, farm workers, tenants, business (traders) and neighbours. Landowners included in the conservancy boundary but not part of the conservancy: Non-governmental organizations, Magaliesberg Advisory Council, Magaliesberg Protection Association, Government organizations, North West Provincial Government, Gauteng Provincial Government, Brits Local Municipality, Rustenburg Local Municipality, Mogale City Local Municipality.

While it is proposed that the new Steering committee be kept as small and effective as possible, the committee should allow for the various groups involved in the area to be represented on the steering committee by at least one steering committee member. It is proposed that an open meeting be held at least twice a year where individuals can raise matters without having to work through a representative. In general, the structure of the committee must include a Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer, environmental project co-coordinator and additional members. Non-land owners such as government representatives, will not be allowed to vote.

Constitution

The next and most important step in establishing the conservancy will be drawing up a constitution that is acceptable to all parties. The constitution will need to cover the following topics: name of conservancy, objectives, membership and fees, defined area, juristic person, financial arrangements, annual meeting, special general meetings, management (committee), management

meetings, minutes, constitution arrangements (changes etc), powers of management, house rules, dissolution of the conservancy, interpretation, cessation of activities. The constitution should act as a guideline document for the management of the conservancy, and will be affected negatively by subdivision of land and owners wishing to sell their land to buyers who do not wish to abide by the rules and regulations of the conservancy.

BIOPHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Game introduction

Introducing game was generally received positively, and issues were raised on which the following principles were developed:

- The carrying capacity of the veld should not be exceeded;
- The game to be introduced should not be a threat to hikers in the Magaliesberg;
- Only types of game appropriate for the Magaliesberg should be introduced;
- Game that replaces species lost to the area historically should be reintroduced;
- The scheme whereby the conservancy is stocked with game should be structured in such a way that expenditure incurred by members of the conservancy can be recovered from the proceeds of selling excess game;
- A plan to indicate how excess game will be removed, must be developed in collaboration with the landowners;
- No hunting for financial gain will be allowed in the conservancy;
- Dogs should not be allowed to move freely in the areas where game will be introduced;
- The Steering Committee in association with the game owners will determine the game to be removed from the conservancy;
- Game will only be hunted or removed by any member with the knowledge of the Steering Committee and with appropriate permits;
- Procurement of game for the larger conservancy area should be centralized in order not to exceed the carrying capacity of the land.

A specialist in the field will be consulted to comply with these principals.

Fencing

The ultimate aim of the conservancy should be that all internal game and other fences of landowners in the conservancy be removed once an external fence is erected. However, present game owners have indicated that to insist on an undertaking from them at this stage to remove all internal fences is self-destructive as their willingness to let their expensive game roam through the entire area will depend almost entirely on the success of the scheme and the full cooperation of all the approximately 50-60 landowners involved in phase 1. A large investment in game, in one case valued at over R3.000.000, cannot be placed at risk by insisting on the abandonment of all internal game fences at a stage when the present and future cooperation of all landowners has not been tested and proven to exist.

Principles:

- Only fencing of the conservancy as a whole should be considered and not fencing of individual farms;
- Fencing must not restrict the movement of game presently naturally occurring in the Magaliesberg;
- Fencing alternatives must investigate the movement of certain species through the area and attempt to avoid hindering such movement;
- Visual assessments must be completed for fencing locations in scenic areas and alternatives must be investigated in this regard;
- The ultimate aim should be that all landowners' internal game and other fences be removed if an external fence be erected. However, compulsory removal is considered impractical and inadvisable at this stage;
- Fencing around homesteads will be advisable;
- However, once the perimeter fence has been established and has been objectively assessed and found to keep game successfully inside the perimeter of the fence, landowners included in the conservancy should be encouraged to take down internal game fencing;
- Cattle fences can be retained should cattle be farmed on a specific property within the conservancy;
- A standard of fencing will be set for the Conservancy to which all owners will have to conform. Whilst the conservancy boundary fence may be electrified in limited sections, it is envisaged that the largest sections will not be electrified due to increased costs and ecological sensitivities.

Management of the land (fire management, alien plant control)

The conservancy will be subject to an ecological management plan drawn up by a specialist, which will stipulate when, where and what actions will be undertaken at various times of the year. It will further indicate the responsibilities for the implementation of the management plan. The plan will address the following matters but not be limited to these:

- Burning firebreaks programme;
- Monitoring of and reporting on eco-system health (fauna and flora);
- Rehabilitation of disturbed areas;
- Maintenance of existing infrastructures (e.g. roads, fences);
- Locating of and appropriate removal of exotic vegetation;
- Waste management/Litter control.

ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

Costs

The costs that will be associated with the running and maintenance of a conservancy is a crucial issue that would need to be clarified in order to allow landowners to determine whether money expenditure will be affordable in the short, medium and long term. It is envisaged that expenditure will be required to cover administrative fees as well as smaller financial outlays for maintenance. Expenditure will initially also be required for the erection of a game fence on the perimeter of the conservancy. In a first attempt to address the matter, some figures are listed below which will give an indication of fence costs that will be required, as well as a proposal as to how such costs can be covered.

Fence

The perimeter of the phase 1 fence is presently 44254 m in extent and the perimeter of phase 2 is 35 295 m in extent. (approximate cost of a fence per meter R50.00). Whilst roughly 25% of the phase 1 fencing exists, the required sections of fencing which have not been erected at this point in time, will be covered by the landowners affected by the fence passing through their properties. It will however not be covered on a land portion basis, but rather by the group of landowners affected by a specific stretch of fence. This will allow for the distribution of costs between all landowners that will be benefited by being included in the conservancy.

Monthly administration fee

For ad hoc management actions and administration fees, a monthly fee is proposed. Such a fee will have to be established by the elected Steering Committee but should be affordable. This fee will have to be based on the envisaged management costs. Costs associated with the management of game as well as the identity of those responsible parties for such costs will have to be established. It is however envisaged that the bulk of game management costs will be covered by owners of game.

Procurement of game

It has been mentioned by some landowners that they are not willing to contribute to these costs although they do not have any objection to the movement of game over their property. It can therefore be expected that the landowners who would want to procure game, will agree and negotiate with each other and carry the costs between themselves. The constitution will however clearly stipulate that game moving onto other properties, will remain the property of the buyer/s and may not be hunted or harmed by any landowner on which property it wishes to move within the boundaries of the conservancy.

General administration of funds

The administration of funds should be transparent and available for scrutiny by all landowners at any time. The Steering Committee will provide infrastructure and procedures for collecting the funds in a specifically allocated bank account.

Principles:

- A business plan must be drawn up to assess all the costs involved;
- A proper list of all land portions and land owners must be drawn up to determine costs allocations;
- A monthly administration fee will be carried by each land portion;
- The monthly administration fees must be affordable but based on the expenses determined for the conservancy;
- Costs associated with the procurement or selling of game will be negotiated between landowners willing to contribute financially to game;
- An administration system must be developed by the Steering Committee to administer the funds in a transparent and responsible way;

•The impact of the conservancy on land values should be assessed on regular intervals in order to ensure economic sustainability in the long term.

SECTION 3 CONCLUSION

The concept of the proposed conservancy was generally positively received by a wide range of landowners and interested parties. At the same time, a wide variety of issues were raised throughout the feasibility study. Such issues were raised and addressed in the Feasibility report where possible while other issues still remain to be dealt with in the next Stages of this project. Many of the issues can be addressed by creative and practical solutions if the landowners agree to the concept of their being included into the conservancy.

The issues presently identified that will potentially affect the feasibility of this project, are as follows:

General maintenance costs and specifically costs associated with the construction of a fence around the proposed conservancy. These costs will have to be determined in the next Stage of this initiative.

The buy-in of significant landowners such as the Mountain Club of South Africa once the real costs of the fence has been established. The MCSA consists of a wide group of members with varying views on the matter of a conservancy. A specific process will therefore have to be followed by the managing committees of the two branches involved, to ensure that all the facts are on the table and that a unified opinion is developed for the MCSA for the purposes of decision-making.

Based on inputs from landowners, the establishment of a Phase 1 conservancy will be feasible, but the resistance of the landowners in the centre who owns large pieces of land of the total larger area who owns large pieces of land, may affect the feasibility of a larger conservancy in the short term.

The fencing of a section of land in the Magaliesberg Protected Natural Environment has historically not been supported by authorities. This project will present an opportunity to investigate the impacts, type and nature of fencing that can be proposed for the conservancy which will allow for sustainable conservation in the MPNE in the long term.

A number of specialist studies and documents were identified to address some of the concerns raised during the first stage of this initiative. Should funding not be available to initiate these studies, the project will not progress. Such studies and documents include:

- A draft constitution
- Development of a system to demarcate property boundaries in the absence of fencing
- Develop a system to manage movement of people to prevent trespassing
- Establish the carrying capacity of the veld for game and veld management purposes – Conservation Management Plan and Environmental Management Plan
- Game Management Plan
- Provincial legal application procedure for authorization to construct a fence (includes visual assessment and fence alternatives as well as related impact assessments)
- Burning programme
- Business plan to detail costs (operational and otherwise) e.g. detailed costing of fencing and day to day operational costs

The Mountain Club of South Africa – Position with respect to the Magaliesberg Conservancy

The Mountain Club of South Africa is a "not for profit" organisation that has as its constitutional objectives the following:

1. Organise and facilitate mountaineering.
2. Procure and protect real rights in and access to mountains and mountain areas.
3. Initiate and support actions towards protecting the natural beauty and wilderness character of mountains and to promote their effective conservation management.
4. Promote the safety and training of mountaineers.
5. Organise search and rescue parties.
6. Promote the study of mountains and their environments, the preservation of historical and archaeological sites on them and the dissemination of information on mountains and mountaineering.

Two of these objectives: "2: Real rights and access" and "3: Protect and conserve" mean that we acquire land in mountainous areas where desirable.

Because we are a non-profit organisation, and because we wish to protect our access and to conserve mountain land, we are extremely unlikely to regard monetary gain from land as being a significant factor in our ownership of land.

As a land owner in the Magaliesberg, the Mountain Club has frequent contact with other landowners, and where possible will cooperate with and support many of the initiatives undertaken in the Magaliesberg area, but always with reference to objectives 2 (Access) and 3 (Conservation).

We have a fire policy, conservation policies and working weekends to maintain and conserve our properties and have specific portfolios on the committees to deal actively with land, conservation and ownership issues.

The ownership of land in the Magaliesberg is usually shared by both the Johannesburg Section and the Magaliesberg (Pretoria) Section. Each section tends to fund acquisitions proportional to their membership.

With specific regard to the Damhoek Conservancy the objectives of "Conservation and Access" govern our response to the initiative.

Therefore our approach to the three issues that we see with respect of the Damhoek Conservancy is as follows:

1. The conservancy: In principle the Mountain Club sees the conservancy as a positive development and will support it, provided our access to our land is not compromised.
2. The fence: We believe we do not have enough facts to make a decision here, and await the publication of the Environmental Impact Statement. However in general discussions, our membership is divided on the issue both because of the cost (installation and maintenance) and the benefits, which at this stage appear to offer no clear gain for the club in terms of access or conservation. We will examine the EIS in this light.
3. Game: The MCSA does not place any importance on game or game farming, other than that register a concern that it may negatively affect our access. Therefore we will, at best, be passive in this matter, provided our access is unaffected.

A final note on our position on the Damhoek Conservancy: Because we are a club (Two Sections with separate constituencies), the committee of each section will have to take any recommendations to a Special General Meeting to allow our members to vote on the matter. We have no allocation of funds for 'fencing' and therefore will have to raise the funds specifically for that purpose. Because of these two factors (voting and funding) the benefits of actively participating in the conservancy will need to be compelling.

The following letter was submitted to the news letter by Francois Junod in view of the clubs standpoint on the issue of the conservancy. Francois Junod is an honorary member of both the Johannesburg and Magaliesberg Sections and the Gold Badge of the MCSA was presented to him for his services to mountaineering. He is also an important property owner in the Magaliesberg with interests in Maretwane, Castle Gorge, Likkwaan Kloof, Dorne Pools, Easter Kloof and Boulder Kloof, any of which might form part of the proposed conservancy depending on how plans develop.

The Magaliesberg Conservation project

I have been asked to help the MCSA and some of its still doubtful members to say something as to why the attempt to create a conservancy in the centre of the Magaliesberg needs the support of all those 50 owners, involving over 5000 hectares in Stage One of an even greater scheme to incorporate another 3000 hectares. I have hesitated to come into the fray in view of my own position as Chairman of the Interim Committee set up to see whether this scheme can ever get off the ground, even with the present financial help of the WWF. The MCSA and the Johannesburg Hiking club already have three of its members on the Interim Committee.

At a recent public meeting of all owners the MCSA was accused of being what the Afrikaans-speaking property owner called "bek-bewaarders" because, as he saw it, their alleged enthusiasm to protect the Magaliesberg as one of the principal and largest owners of the mountain is not followed up by deeds and money in the bank. They are allegedly never there when a massive fire has to be fought and are not there when funds are needed to do the very job of protection which their Club set in motion some thirty years ago. At this stage the Club has in fact indicated its willingness to participate in protection but not in the erection of a game fence on the periphery of the 8000 hectare area sought to be protected. It is of course perfectly true that the present original initiative for a conservancy was in fact the result of a meeting of minds from game owners within the area who wished to consider forming a larger game area which would enable game to move freely over a much larger surface than that covered by the 12 existing game owners (8 on the south of the mountain and five on the north) within the conservancy area.

I have every sympathy for those of the MCSA who are not at all convinced that a game fence should be a pre-requisite to the protection of the Magaliesberg range. But these doubting Thomases must realise that were it not for the efforts of the MCSA in the early days the mountain would never have received the legislative protection it enjoys today. What everyone also needs to realise is that "legislative" protection can amount to no protection at all unless money, time and effort go into making that protection a reality. For historical and political reasons the whole of the Magaliesberg now finds itself almost exclusively in the hands of something like 150 white persons or corporate bodies and institutions. This is incidentally one of the main reasons why so little governmental financial assistance has as yet been forthcoming from the State towards the protection in practical terms of the Magaliesberg range. It is therefore up to those 150 persons to do something that the State is not as yet prepared to do. The coming together of game owners is therefore but part of a realisation that nothing will happen to save the mountain until all 150 owners pay their part on the ground to do what the State to date has not adequately done.

To create a conservancy one has to determine its physical extent and geographical situation. As it is the present proposal for Stage one of the larger programme involves only 5000 hectares of the 8000 hectares of the larger scheme. One single large owner (and possibly one more) right in the middle of the larger proposed area has declared that he will not under any circumstances allow his land to be touched by anyone but himself and his invitees. Whatever area is finally chosen, it has to be demarcated and protected not just at week-ends but whenever

an emergency occurs. That in its turn involves some legal body or some group of persons **resident within the conservancy** to supervise its control, access and protection. Is the MCSA that person when 99% of its members are unable for obvious yet good reasons to do anything about **daily** supervision, poaching, alien vegetation eradication or fire fighting? If not, who then must the body of persons do the job for it? And who are the persons to pay for that daily protection, regular eradication or poaching? Is the club going to refuse to pay its proportion of the perimeter game fence and anti-poaching activities simply because it does not own the game? Does the Club in no way benefit from game on its property? Does the regular patrolling of the perimeter fence and the regular supervision of game not protect the plant and bird life as well as the small game it already has on its own property? Is the mountaineer in the mountains only here to display his skills on the crags or does he benefit aesthetically or spiritually from the animal, plant and bird life which his Club's property supports?

At this stage the only financial obligation which the Mountain and Hiking Club would undertake is to pay its 32% share (being its and the Hiking Club's share of Upper Castle Gorge on Elandskraal 470 J.Q.) of a game fence over a distance of 3.5 kilometre on the east and north of Elandskraal 479 at an approximate figure of R50.00 per kilometre or some R52,500 - as well as its proportion of the as-yet unknown ongoing yearly costs of patrolling, fire fighting and administration of the Conservancy by a properly constituted and appointed Committee. Nothing is as yet decided, least of all whether the conservancy will in fact get off the ground with the necessary permissions from the authorities concerned. But in order to be able to advance the process, some kind of commitment in principle is required of each owner to find out whether it is worth while taking the process any further. Much spade work still remains to be done, not least of which is the drafting of a well-thought-out Constitution which is to be binding on and acceptable to all members, all successors-in-title as well as all existing or future game owners. In that constitution will be contained all those non-negotiable conditions which are necessary to ensure acceptance of the scheme as a whole by all parties. The MCSA, for instance, may well insist that no game shall be introduced which presents a serious danger to life and limb of its members. Similarly a detailed costing will have to be undertaken of the yearly expenditure necessary for the conservancy's continued existence. The extent to which the game owners will be saddled with the expense of their own of keeping their game alive and healthy wherever that game may be within the conservancy will be another issue still to be sorted out. Preparing a budget for the future is a tremendously unenviable task and not one easily achieved when some 50 individual farmers with often very different views are concerned. But is this task not worth trying? Give and take is going to be essential and the wealthy may well have to be asked to subsidize those that simply cannot afford to contribute at all.

It is therefore only at a much later stage when something very much more concrete is put on the table and made available to each owner that a final decision can or will be taken whether the scheme is indeed viable from an economic point of view. Yet if a big property owner like the Hiking Club or the MCSA indicates already at this stage its unwillingness to participate in principle to the costs involved then surely the project in its entirety is stillborn from the outset. What the Club must realise is that the game owners' initiative involves a very real risk for them of losing control of the very expensive game they are putting in. Expensive game fences already erected and paid for at very considerable cost over many kilometres may have to be removed once the conservancy is in place. Their initiative is therefore has a far more altruistic aspect than has been appreciated to date by those that do not contribute to the game aspect of the project.

Every arduous journey begins with a first step and that step has already been taken with sufficient success to come back to the property owners with a Stage one proposition considered possible by the Interim Committee after now eighteen months of investigation. The question which now has to be taken by the Club is whether to proceed to the next step of authorising that Committee to obtain the necessary permissions, prepare a model constitution acceptable to all and an budget estimate of yearly costs which remains within the means of those that have sponsored the scheme. The ball is now in the court of every member to say yea or nay. But some measure of altruism and compromise is vital to the scheme and I believe that the very Club which initiated the whole protection of the Magaliesberg mountains in the early seventies owes it to its early vision to support the present efforts to make proper protection of our mountains a reality.

Francois Junod

3. CLIMBING NEWS

Montagu Rock Rally 2005

The Rock Rally took place on 24 April 2005 in the small town of Montagu in the Klein Karoo. The Johannesburg section sponsored 3 climbers, Julia Davies, Mark Seuring and Willem le Roux, to take part in this year's event. 57 teams entered the competition, with the Mixed and Senior Men's divisions attracting the largest number of applicants. The objective was to accumulate as many points as possible. A team member could earn points by climbing a route in red point fashion. Points were awarded according to the difficulty of the route climbed, with a grade 11 route earning the team 30 points, a grade 21 earning 130 points and a grade 33 earning a whopping 3200 points. No additional points were awarded for on sighting, or for climbing a route that was hard relative to a climber's ability. Two routes at each grade were awarded double points. Double point routes were not disclosed beforehand. Instead, they were indicated by a smiley face at the base of the climb. Selection criteria for 'smiley' routes included length of walk in, endurance needed and quality of the route. The total duration of the competition was eight hours. The competition format ensured that, unlike the Boven Roc Rally, the teams climbing the hardest routes were likely to be the most competitive.

The two Johannesburg teams gave a good account of themselves. Mark Seuring and Douard le Roux racked up 4325 points, enough to earn them fourth place in the Senior Men's division. Julia Davies and Willem le Roux came third in the Mixed division with 3945 points and also won the Rock Masters award for most routes climbed in the competition (31). This may not sound like much to seasoned Boven Roc Rally competitors, but the average grade climbed in Montagu is much higher than at Boven.

Ben Harper and Arian de Kock proved untouchable in the Senior Men's division. Together they amassed an incredible 11780 points, the highest total in competition history. Among the routes they climbed were Cool like That (29), Point Break (29), Daze of Thunder (28) and Strange Days (31). Had they only climbed 24's, they would have to have climbed XXX routes each to earn the same number of points! Andy and Esme Davies cleaned up the Mixed division, earning 5315 points. Great fun was had by all. A big thanks to the organizers for a great event, and to the Johannesburg MCSA for enabling Johannesburg participation in the competition.

Willem le Roux

Retro bolting in the Magaliesberg

Over the past weeks the following existing bolted lines in the Tonquani complex have been inspected and re-bolted. In some cases, bolts were added (with the permission of the first ascensionist). Top anchors have also been placed where necessary. Whilst the ban on bolting new routes in the Magaliesberg **remains in place**, there are discussions on the possibility of allowing a limited number of hard (26+) new lines to be put up, pending an EIA report.

Boulder Kloof

1. Fame, fortune and glory (27) - R Nattrass, 1988. Fully retro bolted by Andrew Pedley, Flex and, Willem, 2005

Upper Tonquani

2. Cadbury (22) - M Cartwright, C O'Dowd, 1989. 3 bolts replaced, 2005
3. Nestle (23) - M Cartwright, C O'Dowd, 1989. 3 bolts replaced, 2005
4. Last train to glory (21) - R Dodding, 1990. Inspected, top anchors added 2005
5. Return of the Jedi (21) - D Margetts et al, 1989. Inspected, top anchors added 2005

Cederberg Kloof

6. Carrion comfort (25) - M Seegers, D Margetts, 1992. 4 bolts replaced, 2005
7. Horse latitudes (22) - M Seegers, D Margetts, 1992. 1 bolt replaced, 2005
8. Riders of the storm (25) - D Margetts, M Seegers, 1992. 1 bolt replaced, 2005
9. Terminator (28) - M Cartwright, 1990. Inspected
10. Climbing in bed with Madonna (27) - P Lazerus, 1991. Fully re-bolted by Dave Glass and Hector Pringle, 2005

This leaves 24 routes with bolts on in the Tonquani complex unchecked. If anyone is keen to re-bolt them, please contact Neil Margetts. You should get the bolts courtesy of the MCSA. The routes that have received attention have all been found to be of excellent quality. Go try them! (Info taken from www.saclimb.co.za)

Nice climbing! by Eric Riemann and Marc Efuné (Flex) on a flash ascent of Pitch 1 (27) of In Bed with Madonna, Mark Millar - red point ascent. And Fame, fortune, glory (27) was red pointed by Marc Efuné.

MCSA ice-climbing course 2005-04-24

Due to the increasing popularity of ice climbing within the section and more new comers to the sport every year, it has been decided to run a beginners course for budding ice climbers this year.

From a lecture session with an instructional video, a training day to practice ice climbing techniques and then finally a trip to Lesotho for a weekend of ice climbing and good fun, each participant will be able to learn the skills and gain the confidence to enjoy ice climbing and continue exploring this unique medium.

There are only 6 places available for this training event so please book early to reserve your spot on the ice.

Session 1: 10 July 2004 – instructional video, safety and gear training, ice technique training.

Session 2: 16-17 July – the real deal in Lesotho.

Conditions for attending:

- You must be a paid up member of the MCSA, Jo'burg section.
- You must have at least one years rock climbing experience and be able to belay well.
- The follow gear is essential: climbing helmet, climbing harness with karabiner and belay device, good boots that are quite rigid and waterproof, water proof gloves, jacket and trousers, warm clothes and sleeping bag for the trip to Lesotho.

- The course will cost R500 excluding the accommodation in Lesotho.
 - Must have a valid passport to enter Lesotho.
 - The club does hire out ice axes and crampons but if you have your own feel free to bring them along.
- Please contact Gareth Frost (Lofy) if you wish to attend this course. [garethfrost@telkomsa.net or 073 5722515]

International Climbing Meet, 23rd April to 1st May

We hosted 8 British, 2 Belgian and 3 Finnish climbers. One Pakistani had to cancel last minute because of visa problems. The meet started in the Magaliesberg, Mountain Sanctuary Park, from where we climbed in Tonquani, Cederberg Kloof, Lower Fernkloof and Mhlabatini. We then went to Wilgepoort for one day, to Waterval Boven for three days and Krantzberg during the second weekend. All this was made possible by many helpers, collecting guests at the airport and bringing them to MSP as well as joining in with the climbing. Greg Devine and Robert Crommarty, besides myself, had taken off the whole week and were the back bone of the whole operation. Three parties of two each were taken to Blouberg by Mike Grant, Chris Ziraneck and Hector Pringle.

Alard gave a slide show on our first night at MSP, introducing our guests to African crags, those that they were going to visit and others that might tempt them to come back one day. And Terry entertained us with his guitar and songs. Halfway through the week, when all were together, we enjoyed a good South African braai, sponsored by Johannesburg section. This week was much enjoyed by all, guests and locals alike. Our visitors were very impressed by our land and rock and all said they would be coming back for more.

Ulrike Kiefer

International Climbing Meeting in Bulgaria

The Federation of the Bulgarian Alpine Clubs invites climbers to the International Climbing Meeting which is going to take place on September 2005 in Vratza, Bulgaria. The invitation and the registration forms can be obtained from Ulrike This email address is being protected from spambots. You need JavaScript enabled to view it."*'+addy_text99838+'</va>'; //--> or Jenny. For more information, please contact the Federation of the Bulgarian Alpine Clubs directly.

4. ADVENTURE RACING

Adventure racing is a sport that has grown tremendously in popularity in the last few years, and for those who haven't a clue what it is all about. It is a competitive team sport which involves racing through natural areas (usually mountains and rivers) using a combination of outdoor skills and activities such as cross country running, hiking, mountain biking, orienteering, abseiling etc. Races tend to be long, and very physically demanding. Sounds like fun, well it is, and a number of our members compete in these events on a regular basis. Here lies the problem. The club has been approached on occasion to use our land as a venue for future races. A prime example of issues the committee has to deal with in terms of conflict of interest. The clubs standpoint against adventure racing in the kloofs is supported by many members of the club who themselves compete in these events, for several reasons. This type of racing can be environmentally damaging in pristine ecologically sensitive areas. For example a single race can destroy/erode the delicate access paths into and out of the kloofs, which the club struggles to maintain just through normal slow hiking and climbing traffic. There is no commitment from race organisers to prevent damage before, or repair damage after a race. There is also the issue of public liability, since most competitors are not club members, so who is liable should there be death or injury on club land? Several members object on the basis that such races will impinge on their right to a quiet and peaceful day in the kloofs. In keeping with the Chairman's briefing to both the AGM in March and to Concom in April, we believe that we need to commit ourselves to engage with adventure racing organizations for two reasons – firstly ignoring a problem tends not to cause the problem to disappear, and secondly, the Mountain Club needs to engage with all recreational mountain users in order to build a constituency of influence to respond to increasing commercial and government pressures placed on both mountain users and on owners of mountain land. So we need to engage with these various organizations to map a way forward. Useful suggestions and debate, can be sent to the Editor newsletter@jhb.mcsa.org.za, or better still, if you want to volunteer to help, there is more work than we can handle.

Member feedback: As a competitor over many years in all manner of racing events, including mountain running and canoeing, I share the concerns expressed having seen some of the damage wrought by the macho type racers who are seemingly only interested in conquering rather than being part of. I also recognise that one needs to go with the flow up to a point however and find the notion of adventure racing quite appealing.

One way is to limit the number of competitors in any event, which is commonly done, but also be firm in what routes can be used and which not. Surely that is possible. What about a deposit from organisers to cover costs for damage repair (not ideal, but might encourage some care). Alternatively provide a route that is so demanding that few will be interested. I am sure many will have heard the complaints when the going is too tough and it is likely that many of the adventure racing breed are similar.

lan C-C

5. LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

RE: a trip down memory lane, 16 March 1952



A faulty assumption by T. J. Louw – of course I suffered ill effects -my feelings were hurt. On returning from a climb we were met by a man, presumably Dick Charlton triumphantly holding the eel aloft and claiming to have baited it with HAM. Whilst all other eels in Tonquani have my total respect, that one didn't. When I stood up with blood pouring down my leg, he was still there leering up at me. If he/she had been less ambitious and settled for a smaller bite, a hole would have been left in my shapely bottom. At least I now know his/her name, and thanks for the background information.

Joan

Thank you Joan for amusing us with this, it was more fun than the original article. Ed.

6. MEMBERSHIP NEWS

2005 Committee: We say goodbye to Andries Lategan (Land and Access), Diana Duthe (Conservation) and Gareth Frost (Bolting and Ice Climbing) and thank them for their hard work serving on the 2004 committee. We welcome the new office bearers, details on the meets schedule.

Welcome to the following new members: David Ringo, Rachel Bickford, Vernon Prigge, Sandhir Singh, Valerie Thöle, Bernard Robinson, Greg Borman, Machiel Jooste, Antoinette(Toni) Joubert, Tanja Hiestermann, Frank Meneses and Andre Wedepohl. Junior members Jessica and Jason Wedepohl and family members Matthew Byrd and Kiran Prigge.

Transferred: TromEP section, Ken Thrash. To CapeTown Tim Dunnett.

Resigned: Richard Stewart.

Passed away: With regret we advise the passing away of David Crabtree and Secundo Rech and former member Phillip McLagan. Our sincere condolences to family and friends. Secundo Rech joined our section in 1952 and was one of the members who assisted in the building of the Wolkberg Hut. David Crabtree joined our section in 1953, was a member until 1989 and recently rejoined.

5. CLUB NEWS

Clubhouse times: As from June we will be starting club evenings at 19h30, and hope to start slide shows at 20h00.

Wilgepoort access: this area is only available for official club meets. No private meets

2004 Journal: The deadline for the 2004 Journal has been extended to the end of June. So do something exciting, then write about it!!!!

SA Climb Inn: Fully paid up section members will have the following benefits when using the facilities of the gym. 15% discount on daily fees, 20% discount on monthly/annual fees, special benefits for the Search & Rescue team and Outreach programs.

July Camp: KZN Natal Section's annual July Camp will be held at Highmoor from 2 -16 July. For application forms contact Kay Nixon kay@icfr.unp.ac.za directly, or Uschi Magg. Closing date, end of May.

Youth Meet: 16 June at Boven. Contact Gustav.

MCSA annual dinner: will be held on 13 August 2005, and will be hosted by Eastern Province section. Further details to follow.

75th Anniversary: Next year, the Johannesburg section celebrates its 75th anniversary. Volunteers are required to help organise this event. Contact Uschi.

World Environment Day: 5 June. Chop down an exotic tree to celebrate!

Banff Film Festival: Will be held from 16 - 22 September at the NuMetro, Monte Casino, at 20h00. We intend having an opening evening on 16 September.

Singles Meet: Interested in helping to organise a singles meet, can contact Peter Adrian (newsletter@jhb.mcsa.org.za).

JHB Section Website Tender: The work to maintain the section's website is exceeding the capacity of the volunteer on the committee. The committee is thus calling on members involved in the IT industry with experience of managing websites and website content to submit a proposal to the club detailing the services which they can provide and the costs of such services.

Please email documents to: admin@jhb.mcsa.org.za before 30 June.

Conservation portfolio: The committee member elected under the conservation portfolio, has had to step down, due to work commitments. If anybody is interested in sitting on the committee in the conservation portfolio, please contact Uschi Magg. Jenny Paterson is currently standing in for Ian C-C.

For sale: Scarpa ice boots, new, size 8.5. R1800. Dachstein boots size 44 good condition R340. Uschi.