



Fynbos Conservation Awards 2011

Picture (taken by Gizelle van Wyk): Fltr: Chris Martens, Minister Gerrit van Rensburg, Wim Filmlalter (on behalf of Marina Eihlers), Johan van Biljon and Minister Anton Bredell

23 June 2011 – Last night the third annual Fynbos Conservation Awards were awarded through the Cape Action for People and the Environment (CAPE) partnership programme. The awards recognised individuals' outstanding contribution or achievement amongst their peers in the broad biodiversity conservation community. It also showcased successful or innovative work by the conservation sector.

The awards highlighted individual achievements in working towards the goal of the CAPE partnership programme that "by the year 2020, the cooperation of capable institutions ensures that the biodiversity of the CFR is conserved, sustainably utilised and effectively managed, delivering significant benefits to the people of the region in a way that is embraced by local communities, endorsed by government and recognised internationally."

The evening event at Delvera Farm included addresses by the Western Cape Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Mr Gerrit van Rensburg as well as the Western Cape Minister of Local Government, and Environmental Affairs and Development Planning, Mr Anton Bredell.

Minister van Rensburg thanked farmers in general for providing food, creating employment and leading the way regarding the protection of the environment. "Thank you for caring for nature, even during times when it is difficult to care for your family." He also thanked the Department of Agriculture, Western Cape for the excellent work they are doing in terms of relevant research to increase agricultural yields, but with fewer inputs.

Minister van Renburg reiterated that "in the Western Cape, the largest slice of our biodiversity is in the hands of our farmers. It is therefore imperative to have a good working relationship with t this sector, as we need to work side by side in order to protect our biodiversitiy on working farms. And we are already doing that." Minister van Rensburg mentioned the Landcare Programme responsible for recovering river embankments, working in partnership with land owners; the adaption of no-tillage practices, strongly advocated by the Western Cape Department of Agriculture

(currently between 250 000 and 300 000 hectares of dry land crops are being cultivated in this way in the Western Cape); crop rotation and supporting the newly established body, Conservation Agriculture Western Cape, an initiative driven by farmers.

“A key joint initiative between conservation and agriculture is committing to Biodiversity Best Practice for farmers”, said Minister Bredell. He continued by saying that “this project collated, developed and proposed a set of practical guidelines aimed at steering farming operations towards conservation of biodiversity and sustainable agricultural practices, including the protection of sensitive vegetation types, adherence to national legislation governing the management of natural resources, the establishment of core corridors and the sustainable utilisation of groundwater.”

Minister Bredell also regards the new “Western Cape Game Relocation Policy” as a highlight in terms of the conservation of biodiversity, and also because it encourages the further growth of the “green” economy in the Western Cape. “This policy document was a direct result of Cape Nature’s excellent capability to negotiate with the industry and work in partnership with them. This coming weekend will see the first game auction in the Western Cape in Beaufort West and Cape Nature will be there to ensure that the policy is correctly implemented.”

In addition to contributing towards one or more of our government's twelve Strategic Objectives, the winners' achievements may also have contributed in the following ways:

- they were innovative and creative ideas
- they drew new communities into conservation efforts
- was voluntary work and or / work “beyond the call of duty”
- left a legacy in the field of biodiversity conservation or made a significant and lasting impact in a short space of time
- lead to the development of effective new tools
- made a contribution to transformation and capacity development in the sector.

The three awards winners for 2011 were:

Chris Martens, for innovation and leadership in stewardship in the Cape Floristic Region

Marina Eihlers, for passionately inspiring learners in the Central Karoo

Johan van Biljon, for leading conservation and outreach in the Cape Winelands

The 2011 CAPE Partners Conference themed Conservation and Agriculture: A Common Agenda is currently taking place at Elsenberg.

Through its partnership, CAPE is showing how development and sustainable natural resource management are crucial partners in a green economy, and how we can protect biodiversity and ecosystem services while promoting development, economic growth and sustainable rural enterprises.

The Conservation and Agriculture sectors are custodians of the natural resource base, upon which the wealth of many South Africans are built. Ecosystem services and biodiversity are the natural capital that underpins economic growth and development in the Cape Floristic Region. Functioning ecosystem services underpin the vision of a Green Economy, which is one that results in improved human well-being & social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks & ecological scarcities.

Healthy ecosystems enable society to cope with a number of challenges. South Africa has developed a growing practice using ecosystem approaches to environmental management and climate proofing, such as: Riparian areas being reforested to stabilize rivers under high flow conditions; Alien vegetation being removed to improve the quality and quantity of water to serve human needs; Wetlands being restored and conserved to protect their functional role as carbon sinks; protect us from natural disasters like floods, fires and coastal erosion.

Background information

The Cape Floristic Region

The Fynbos Biome, or Cape Floristic Region, is a very special place. It is the smallest of the world's six floral kingdoms, found mostly within the Western Cape. It covers nearly 90 000 km², stretching from the Cederberg to the Nelson Mandela Metropole, in the area between the mountains and the sea. In this relatively tiny area, there are 9 600 recorded plant species, 70% of them found nowhere else on the planet. This very special place is also one of the world's Global Biodiversity Hotspots – the most remarkable places on earth that are also the most threatened.

The Cape Action for People and the Environment Partnership: CAPE

The CAPE partnership programme is a unique internationally acclaimed mechanism that is showing us how we can protect biodiversity and ecosystem services while promoting development and economic growth.

The partnership was created through a principal MOU that was signed in 2002. In this MOU, our Ministers of Natural Resource Management Agencies at National and Provincial levels (including DEA&DP who were then DECAS) committed to cooperate to achieve the objectives of the CAPE and to implement the CAPE Strategy as expeditiously and effectively as possible.

Most importantly, CAPE aims to conserve and restore ecosystem services so that sustainable development and sustainable rural enterprises can be supported.

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