

FOSAF NORTHERN REGION CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR THE 2024/5 PERIOD

1. Finances

The Financial report is attached. Mention must be made of the continued and generous sponsorship by Millstream. This enabled NR to donate R93 000 to the Greater Lakenvlei Protected Environment Landowners Association to assist with the legal fees payable by this body in order to appeal the renewal of the water use licence to the WPB Colliery which is in the heart of the Dullstroom trout fishing area plus other actions required to oppose applications to prospect/mine in the area. As of June 2025, R22 000, is in the organisation's current account and R30 000 in Savings account.

2. Membership.

In 2024/5 the TFFC alone participated in the club membership scheme where at least 50% of the club membership must join to qualify. This brought in R19 000 for the FOSAF National account. Regrettably, the DFFA was unable to participate once again due to a significant decline in their membership numbers. As mentioned, before we are failing to attract new members amongst the young who are taking up the sport.

3. NR Committee

The committee comprises Chris Williams (chairman), Andy Lawler (vice chairman) Peter Arderne (secretary), Vicki Arderne (bookkeeper), Jonty Scott, Warren van Tonder and Martin Rudman.

4. Northern Region Projects

a. Books

Although sales of books to angling stores virtually ceased a fair number are supplied to FOSAF members at the discounted prices. Such sales accrue to the National account.

b. Communications: Website, Facebook & Twitter

The upgraded website which was launched in January 2022 has been well received and the images on the home page were replaced in late 2022 to give the site a fresh look. Use is made of Facebook and our Twitter page to publicise the content on the site.

c. Yellowfish Working Group

Newsletters were sent to the membership until early 2023 but this has ceased due to lack of information and the YWG exists only in name as no annual conference has been held since 2015 due to lack of funds and lack of interest from the provincial departments. At the same time a wealth of valuable information and past research is available on our site.

NR also supports the annual donations made by National since 2020 to the "Save the Sandfish" project. In addition, we suggest that National look closely at the proposal that one or two yellowfish flyfishing stillwaters be developed in the Cederberg.

d. The Vaal River Crisis.

The high-water levels have hampered NGO programmes such as biocontrol, spraying and removal of invasive aquatic weed. The Rhodes University Centre of Biological Control's weevil and hopper breeding/release project on the Vaal continues to be effective against

these destructive aquatic weeds. The CBC have set up 5 Vaal riverside insect rearing stations involving local communities.

The Minister of Water Affairs & Sanitation has given Rand Water the mandate to take over Emfuleni Local Municipality's responsibility and official remit to reduce pollution in the river and also to renovate and repair raw sewage and waste water treatment plants. This 'Vaal Water Corporation' will also be given authority to oversee ELMS operations and sketchy fiscal records.

In addition the DWS and RW have formed yet another committee, the 'Vaal River Anti-Pollution Forum'. The public can vent their rage via the VRAPF but there will be no public access to the Top-Secret machinations and manoeuvrings of the clandestine VWC.

However, it is not all doom and gloom. The 'Vaal Crisis' is out in the open with great public awareness. There is much co-ordination between various NGO aquatic activists and interest groups. In addition, there is increased interdisciplinary communication and working co-operation between scientific, academic and ecological groups. As FOSAF we keep close contact with all the like-minded proactive groups.

To report illegal effluent discharge into the Vaal you can report this at DWS hot line 0800200 200 or customercare@dws.gov.za.

e. Mpumalanga mining crisis.

Opposition to mining in the Trout Triangle is organized by a consortium that includes the Greater Lakenvlei Protected Environment Landowners Association (GLPELA), environmental NGOs, and several flyfishing destinations. The problematic WPB Colliery which has been operating since mid-2018, is in the centre of a flyfishing area and is now surrounded by a protected area, the GLPE which is now 21 000 ha in extent. The GLPELA appealed the decision by the Dept Water Affairs & Sanitation (DWS) to renew their Water Use Licence for this mine. The hearing was held at the Water Tribunal in October 2024, and the appeal was opposed by the DWS. Judgement was handed down in Feb 2025 in which the appeal was dismissed. The GLPELA believes that the judgement was flawed, especially on the grounds that satisfactory consultation was not carried out. However, having spent R220 000 on the appeal sufficient funds are not available to take the judgement on review.

In the meantime, the GLPELA has been very effective in opposing numerous applications for both prospecting and mining rights plus what can only be described as scams and come in the form of "Mining permit applications" which should be limited only to sand, clay or gravel excavations.

f. The Northern Trout Association.

This organisation which strongly supports FOSAF was launched as the Mpumalanga Trout Association in 2015. More recently it incorporated the provinces of KZN, Free State, Gauteng and Limpopo and together with FOSAF is a member of Trout SA.

Whereas FOSAF aims to represent the interest of all flyfishers the NTA is focused on the production of trout and trout fishing venues. Most of the funding for the mapping of the trout zone in 2015 was sourced from the then Mpumalanga Trout Association and to date the NTA has funded over R820 000 in FOSAF's opposition to the listing of trout as invasive and its negotiations with the authorities regarding the controversial draft Aquaculture Development Bill.

It is of concern to the NTA and FOSAF that the matter of listing trout as invasive remains unresolved. After the Department of Forestry, Fisheries & Environmental Affairs (DFFE) lost with costs at the Constitutional Court the Minister set up a Task Team to try and resolve the matter. Unfortunately, progress has remained slow as it has with the draft

Aquaculture Development Bill which both bodies also oppose.
A major problem facing the Mpumalanga members is that an annual permit is required for stocking trout in this province, even in the area in which it was agreed with the provincial authorities that stocking trout may be permitted. Not only has the cost of this permit been increased significantly, but there have been numerous delays in the last two years in the approval of repeat permits which has damaged the hospitality industry relying on trout fishing. Both the NTA and FOSAF contend that in fact no permit should be required for stocking in an agreed trout area. Once agreement is reached between FOSAF/NTA and the DFFE regarding the future status of trout the matter will be taken up with the Mpumalanga Tourism & Parks Agency.

Chris Williams.
Northern Region Chairman.

2