

FRIENDS OF TOKAI FOREST

P O Box 442 Bergvliet 7864

WILDLIFE AND
ENVIRONMENT
SOCIETY OF SA

(NB: See # Care Flora Conservation Sites) (# Info centre)

NEWSLETTER NO 15

MAY 2000

FROM THE TOADSTOOL

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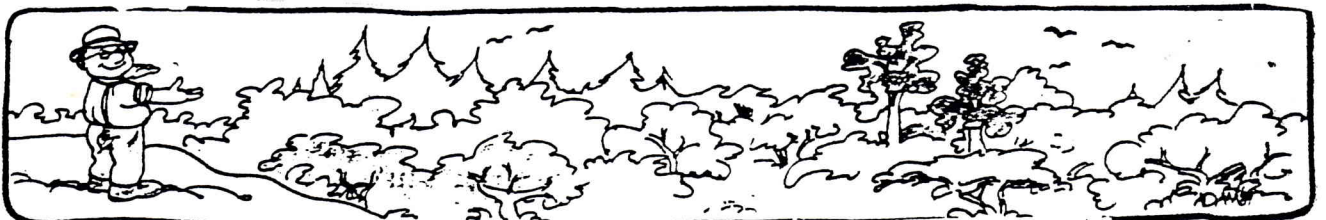
We reported in our March newsletter that there are a number of current planning initiatives to privatise and develop State properties in the Tokai area which have the potential to fundamentally alter it's nature.

We reported on Valli Moosa's assurances that as the CPPNE, into which the SAFCOL plantations fall, is a proposed World Heritage Site, that this area will be given sufficient protection to prevent activities which could cause environmental degradation. The William Porter School properties, which fall outside of the CPPNE, do however fall within the CMC's defined "Urban Edge" which provides a certain degree of protection.

Any proposed change in land use in these areas will have to go through an "Integrated Environmental Assessment (IEA)" process. It is your right as an "Interested or Affected Party (I&AP)" to give inputs and raise concerns through the public participation process as part of the integrated environmental plan.

The current status of the various planning and privatisation initiatives appears (often from hearsay rather than hard fact) to be as follows. If anyone has any other information, please share it, as it only through being properly informed that we can make a meaningful contribution to the public participation process which many potential developers try to play down.

William Porter School: following the Provincial Education Department's decision to close the Porter School, "Project Chrysalis"(reported on below) will take over certain of the school buildings. The balance of the Porter Trust Lands, which includes the Tokai Manor House, have been transferred to the Dept of Asset Management under MEC Hennie Bester. Some of these lands are subject to long term leases, which are under dispute as to their legality, and this situation is being closely monitored by the Tokai Residents' Association. The Constantia Boys' School is being converted to a "Secure Care Centre" and the Girls' School is under the control of Asset Management.



"OUR MISSION: PEOPLE CARING FOR TOKAI FOREST"

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Gerry Higgs (Walks & PRO) 712-4176 / Les Keith (Aliens) 712-9859 / Michael Fowkes (Membership) 712-4663

YOUTH ENVIRONMENTAL SCHOOL



Will do

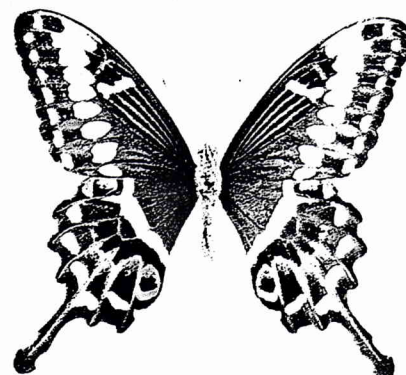
YES 2000: Youth Environmental School: We are delighted that the Cape Metropolitan Council's 2nd Youth Environment School programme will be held at the William Porter School from the 30th May to the 3rd of June, "World Environment Week". This confirms our long felt belief that the Tokai environment is ideal for Environmental Education and we understand that the effort is being enthusiastically supported by schools throughout the CMC area. We will be taking groups of 50 grade 5 to 7 pupils through the Arboretum each day between 10 and 11 am and will be delighted to be joined by "Tokai Friends" on these walks and talks which will follow the "Oakleaf Trail". The four primary schools involved are Lusuko, Kenridge, Harvester and Rosebank. We are only one of the 51 different activities of YES 2000. It is probable that we will be increasingly asked to lead school groups of this nature and would welcome new "Friends" who are willing conduct the occasional walk.

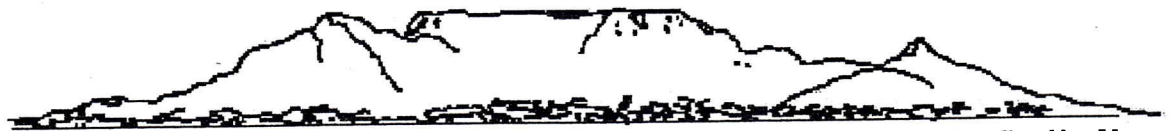
Project Chrysalis will commence at William Porter School on 3rd June. The "Vision" of the project, conceived by Mark Wiley (MEC Provincial Community Safety, Sport and Recreation) is "To reduce levels of crime and violence in the Western Cape by transforming "Youth at Risk" into strong, positive community leaders of the future." It's Mission is "To provide a development opportunity to young men from all communities in the Western Cape, to grow personally and acquire knowledge and skills which will equip them to contribute to society in financial, moral, spiritual and social spheres." The target population is volunteer youths between the ages of 16 and 20 years who have obtained a minimum of grade 10, who are presently unemployed, and have no criminal record. Each 12 week programme will accommodate 100 students, who will have undergone a full selection procedure.

The induction "Orientation" phase involves physical and mental fitness training focussing on life skills such as goal- setting, motivation, basic health and first aid, self- defence, learning skills, study methods, environmental awareness and adopting a disciplined and value driven lifestyle. This will be followed by "Outdoor Experience" where the students will go to a wilderness camp at Sedgfield to acquire a wide range of environmental, leadership, teamwork and personal empowerment skills. This will be followed by an "Occupational" phase at the Westlake Technical College to receive a Basic Engineering Skills Training certificate to allow them entry into further courses at the College which they may wish to pursue, independently, post Chrysalis. They will also be involved in a number of days of Community Service work with a Community Based Organisation. The final "Odyssey" phase will cover a broad range of knowledge and skills to equip the students to pursue career paths of their choice. There will be practical and theoretical personal assessments and a final 72 hour endurance test prior to the passing out display.

During the "Odyssey" phase linkages will be provided for the students to access opportunities in community service, NGO's and the Private Sector. I personally consider that "Project Chrysalis" is an excellent concept which provides a very positive and practical new capacity building opportunity. I believe that we should build relationships with Chrysalis as a way of moving "Forward to a healthy environment."

PROJECT CHRYSALIS





P E N I N S U L A M O U N T A I N F O R U M

Cape Peninsula National Park/ SAFCOL Privatisation/ Tokai Manor House

Three years ago SAFCOL management assured us that they were committed to bring the Tokai and Cecilia plantations "under the ambit" of the proposed new Cape Peninsula National Park (CPNP). Current indications are that discussions are at an advanced level to exclude these plantations from the privatisation process and to eventually bring them into the integrated management plan for the CPNP. This does not imply any change of land use or elimination of all the plantations. As reported above, any proposed change of land use, whether under SAFCOL or CPNP management, will have to undergo a rigorous public participation process.

Two years ago we agreed a vision for our area. This included the CPNP headquarters being centred on Tokai Manor House and Tokai being the major "Gateway" to the central portion of the Cape Peninsula National Park". I recently represented the Friends of Tokai Forest at a cocktail party in the Manor House hosted by the CPNP for the World Bank officials who are overseeing the \$12.3 million grant from the Global Environment Fund for the Cape Floral Kingdom. We were hoping that there would be some public announcements in this regard during the coming "World Environmental Week", but understand that we need to be patient.

On the 12th May, Valli Moosa (Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism), advertised for nominations for suitable persons to serve on the Cape Peninsula National Park Committee. We have been working with other environmental groups such as the Wildlife & Environment Society (WESSA), Botanical Society, Peninsula Mountain Forum (PMF), and Environmental Justice Networking Forum to agree a list of suitable nominees and suggest broad terms of reference which will ensure the independence of this important local advisory committee to our unique National Park

Proposed Silvermine Communications Base Development: This week, together with other I&AP's, we met with representatives of the Public Works Department from Pretoria who intend putting up 5 State properties to tender for development. We discussed the unique context of the Silvermine site and it was agreed that we and other I&Aps would be given full opportunity to participate in scoping the broad parameters for development prior to any tender or Land Use rezoning applications are undertaken.

WESSA "Development, Planning & EIA's for the Western Cape" Project. The homework phase of this very important and time consuming project is now drawing to a close. The aim of the project was to examine the entire decision- making process, identify problem areas and propose a process that would prevent the same problems in future. The comprehensive report and four easy to read and use pamphlets are available from the Wildlife & Environment Society Shop in Kirstenhof. This information will be invaluable for anybody affected by proposed developments who is willing to get involved in the public participation process. One of the great changes in our new democracy is that we are now empowered by powerful environmental legislation to play a very meaningful role in scoping proposed development projects prior to the decision making phase. It is hard work, but we have no excuse if we later face unwanted developments in our back yard.

...time to act

Paradyskloof High Court Review: WESSA is requesting a review of development decisions made by the MEC's for Planning and Environment for the Western Cape. The contention is that the rezoning of the land and approval of the development was premature in that the decisions were made prior to the completion and public consideration of the relevant environmental impact assessments. If the application is successful, it will set a legal precedent which should go a long way to ensuring that future decisions are made strictly in terms of the laws that were designed specifically to facilitate environmentally wise and sustainable development.

MEMBERSHIP

Michael Fowkes Tel: 7124663

The management committee decided at our May meeting to recommend to the AGM of Friends of Tokai Forest on Sat 2nd Sept 2000 to increase membership fees from R15 to R20 single and from R20 to R30 for family and group membership. Regrettably the cost of postage, printing, computer ink cartridges etc is escalating to such an extent that we can no longer afford to send out newsletters and make posters etc at the same subs rate as in 1996. The good news is that **ALL RENEWALS & NEW MEMBERS BEFORE END AUGUST 2000 WILL BE AT THE OLD RATE. PLEASE SEE ENCLOSED MEMBERSHIP FORM.**

ENVIRONMENT WEEK GETOGETHER : SAT 3RD JUNE

See the separate notice and please join us in the Arboretum from 3 to 5pm for a most interesting chat with Prof Joey Coetzee and exchange of information afterwards over a cup of tea or glass of wine.

MUSHROOM PICKING n' COOKING SUN 23RD JULY

We are delaying this popular outing this year in the hope that by July we will be back to normal Cape Winter weather after the appalling long hot summer. Dr Nicki Allsop will join us again in the Arboretum at 9am to chat about Fungi and lead us on a collection of the various fungi in Tokai forest at that time. Nicki believes that we will probably find a number of new varieties this year as we will be a month later than normal.

Weather and nature willing, we can then cook the edible mushrooms which we have found. Remember only properly controlled and safe camping stoves. No open fires can be allowed.

AGM ON ARBOR DAY SAT 2ND September

We will find an interesting speaker to join us in the Arboretum for our 5th AGM. Any suggestions will be most welcome. More later in our August newsletter.

CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT SUN 17TH December

We are still looking for Friends prepared to assist in the convening of this wonderful event. Will only take a few hours of your time and most of the network is in place.

LOWER FOREST WORKPARTY 3RD SAT EACH MONTH

CAPE PENINSULA NATIONAL PARK

WORLD HERITAGE SITE

**THE FOREST FLOOR - CONSERVATION- Jenny Mountain Tel 7947129
& EDUCATION Lesley Skarzynski Tel 7122282**

We have developed an exhibit on the Flora of Tokai Forest for display in the Arboretum Exhibition Centre and will replace the summer flower posters displayed in the Lower Tokai Forest when, hopefully, the rains finally come in May.

The inclusion of the lower forest into the **Core Flora Conservation Sites** is very important. These 37 areas have been identified as the most viable minimum set of areas required to best conserve the unique plants of the Cape Flats Flora area where the density of species threatened with extinction ranks among the highest in the world. Only 3 of these sites are currently managed effectively and it is recommended that all core sites are given official conservation status and proper management. Collectively these core sites will conserve 97,5% of the plants unique to the Cape Flats. Of the 76 unique species, 47 are threatened with extinction unless urgent action is taken.

We need someone to take over stewardship from Jenny Mountain who will be leaving our group to concentrate on her own area with Friends of Constantia Valley Greenbelts. We have all the groundwork laid by our predecessors and more recently Sybil Morris. We have a formal conservation status within the CPPNE and the CPNP probably some time in the future. We can start with the small area where the pines were destroyed by fire and which is waiting to flourish when the rains come. You don't have to be an expert: there are very competent people to guide you. What offers?

The **Oak Leaf Trail** in the Arboretum is currently being modified. It will include the lovely ring of historic Cork Oaks between the Gums and the Canary Pines, take in the new path over the wetland and add more interest to last sections of the trail. New pamphlets should shortly become available in the Lister's Place Arboretum Tea Garden.

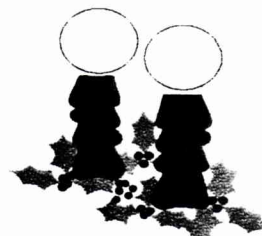
The Wildlife and Environment Society will hold its annual **Friend's Workshop Meeting** on Saturday 6th May from 8h30 to 3pm at the Barn Sanctuary in Kirstenhof. Anne Bean and John Green will co-chair the meeting and Marion Dunkeld, the new national Friends liaison officer will come down from Nyl's Vlei to discuss rejuvenation of the Friend's movement. Liz McDaid, a WESSA: WC Environmentalist, will lead discussion on "How to Stop Developers Trashing your Area". We should be represented by 3 people. Volunteers please to what promises to be a very constructive gettogether with other Friend's Groups.

We are in need of an individual who is handy with a hammer to remount exhibitions in the Arboretum Information Centre.

We are still looking for someone to take on this portfolio. Everything pertaining to same is already in place. It is now a matter of executing same in good time and order. Are you that person? Can you help??

CAROLS by CANDLELIGHT

SUN. 17. DEC.



The recent fires that ravaged the mountains of the Western Cape, moving so quickly and devastatingly through the Valley, has highlighted the need of **public and individual** participation in view of the lack of political resources. Many action groups have already been initiated by Constantia Valley residents who have not only shown themselves willing, but determined to have an active role in not only protecting themselves and their neighbours, but that of their environment as well.

Only volunteers with the intention of harnessing community spirit can appreciate the incredible return and satisfaction of knowing that something, no matter how small, has been put back into the community or environment, of which we all are an integral part.

These fires brought the best out of us and we are grateful for those who did "their bit".

80 square kilometers were burnt out! Five houses, one car, one fire engine, and one front end loader were caught in the fire. Personnel and staff were trapped and there were from minor to severe injuries. Thankfully no human loss to life. But unfortunately pets were lost and burnt. As were most of the tortoises, porcupines, snakes, buck and other living things on the mountain. Very little has survived. The two baboon troops did. There is little or no food for them up there.

From the various meetings held, it became evident that better prevention methods are necessary. Various groups were called upon to participate. **Friends of Tokai Forest** made representation on your behalf.

Discussed, amongst other issues which are not relevant here, were:

- Alien Vegetation:** Needs urgent addressing.
Better control. Legislation.
Back Burns. Hacking.
- Urban Fringe Belts:** Need to be better maintained.
Suggestion to grow the wild fig around certain areas. (Does not burn.)
- Properties:** Keeping same clean and clear of invasive vegetation.
- Cut Vegetation:** Disposal of same immediately.
- Public Awareness:** Increase same.
- And Mud Slides:** There are different types of fires. This one was absolute. The alien growth caused fire balls (pockets of heat and flame which move at incredible speed – faster than a speeding train) higher than a tall building, fed by oxygen from alien growth generated inside the ball. With this type of fire, the intensity of heat is profound. It destroys everything in its path.
The heat is so intense it kills everything deep into the ground. Any animal that might have found refuge, any plant organism. Any tree's root or base is left to slowly burn for up to three weeks afterwards, under the ground. This leaves a fine ash like soil devoid of any nutrients. It is dry and wispy.

Comes the Winter rains, the entire side of our mountain is going to start to move downhill.

What are we going to do about this? How can you help?

Some useful numbers to put in your diary or in your cell phone if you should see even the beginnings of a small fire. Please report immediately to:

Tokai Look Out: 712.7471
SPM Mountain Fires: 790.1045
Emergency Fire/Rescue: 73.1892

Or you could attempt to put the fire out yourself. First and foremost, **clear the ground** away from around the fire of all loose stuff, create a fire break if you can. Then break a branch off a green tree and beat the outside of the fire making sure the wind is blowing on your back.
