Welcome to BCA Focus

This is the first issue of BCA Focus, a quarterly newsletter focused entirely on the Blaauwberg Conservation Area (BCA) and surrounds – providing news on the BCA and information on opportunities for getting involved.

The BCA constitutes one of the few remaining opportunities to ensure the long-term protection of an exceptional resource in the midst of one of the fastest growing metropolitan areas in South Africa.

Through a number of partnerships and initiatives, the BCA vision – to conserve, protect and enhance the unique natural, historical and cultural resources of the area for the enjoyment and education of present and future generations – is being made a reality.

BCA Focus is funded by the international Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) as part of an exciting project (see article on page 2) being undertaken in the BCA. It will be distributed free of charge to any organisation or individual interested in the BCA. For any queries relating to this newsletter, please contact Michelle Preen at (021) 701 1397 or michelle@wessa.wcape.school.za

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BCA background

The concept of a nature area around the Blaauwberg Hill has been around since the early 80s. In 1998, work commenced on a Development and Management Plan for the BCA. In 2000, the Development and Management Plan and its recommendations were finalised and adopted by the local authorities. Then in late 2000, an Implementation Co-ordination Committee (ICC) was established for the BCA, comprising representatives of local and provincial government, parastatal and non-government organisations.

A number of specific actions have been undertaken under the auspices of the ICC, including:

- Preparation of an Implementation Plan for the BCA western section.
- Preparation of a detailed GIS-based inventory of Attributes and Sensitivity Analysis for the Primary Conservation Zone.
- Preparation of draft Guidelines for the Conservation Interface Zone.
- Implementation of a Coastal Zone protection and enhancement programme, which included:
  - Rationalisation, surface improvement and demarcation of parking areas;
  - Control of illegal access to the sensitive dune and beach environment;
  - Signage – locational, educational and regulatory; and
  - Dune rehabilitation programme.
- Refurbishment and equipping of an environmental centre.
- An invasive alien vegetation clearing programme.
- A land acquisition programme to acquire environmentally significantly land in private ownership.

An amount of R9.5 million was allocated by the City of Cape Town for acquisition of environmentally significant land in private ownership that forms part of the Primary Conservation Zone of the BCA. One of the significant properties, 340ha in extent, was purchased during July 2002. Budgets have been allocated annually since 1998 by the City for specific studies relating to the planning of the BCA. A capital budget of close on R1.4 million was committed on the 2001/2002 budget for implementation actions. This was used for the Coastal Zone protection and enhancement programme. A capital budget of R1.51 million was allocated on the 2003/2004 City budget. This has been and is being used for the refurbishment and equipping of the environmental centre, erosion and rehabilitation work, as well as interpretive facilities. The City also transferred a nature conservation officer to the BCA and provided an operational budget for on-ground management action. Furthermore, an Eco-Schools programme has been initiated, centred on the BCA and focusing on Atlantis and Mamre schools.

To find out more about this unique area, please visit www.bca.org.za
BCA-CEPF Project

The Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa Western Cape Region (WESSA Western Cape) as lead agent for a partnership project with the City of Cape Town, has recently received grant funding from the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) for use in the BCA.

As part of the C.A.P.E (Cape Action for People and the Environment) programme, WESSA Western Cape applied to the CEPF for funding to embark on an exciting programme in the BCA. This Fund is a joint initiative of Conservation International, the Global Environmental Facility, the Government of Japan, the MacArthur Foundation and the World Bank. A fundamental goal of the CEPF is to ensure that civil society is engaged in biodiversity conservation, something close to the heart of the WESSA mission.

The BCA-CEPF project began in November 2003 and will run until the end of January 2005. To date, nature conservation staff have been appointed to the BCA, the necessary equipment has been purchased and a draft Management Plan for the area has been initiated. Conservation Management Programmes and their associated activities are being implemented. These include illegal access control, reserve management, erosion control, clearing of alien vegetation, law enforcement, planning a hiking trail, developing resource materials, recording biodiversity and habitat rehabilitation.

Capacity-building and training, as part of a poverty alleviation programme, has also begun with 15 labourers (8 women and 7 men) who have been recruited from DuNoon, which is 13 km from the BCA. Training is taking place for two days each month. The draft curriculum, which has taken into account the BCA management needs and the aspirations of the trainees includes: local flora and fauna, tourism and hospitality links to the BCA, fire fighting, First Aid and Primary Health Care, use of herbicides, bank accounts and basic budgeting, literacy and numeracy in the workplace, as well as the appropriate use and maintenance of tools. These labourers will also be working on the ground in the reserve.

The facilitation of civil society involvement in the initiative is an important aspect of the project. To promote communication and enable the dissemination of information, a website (www.bca.org.za) has been set up and this newsletter will be sent out quarterly. Identification of opportunities for various groups to become involved is ongoing.

Opening of BCA EE Centre

An Environmental Education (EE) Centre at Eerstesteen in the BCA was launched on 19 February 2004. The cabin was donated by the broadcast company, ESPN, who used it as a base for broadcasting during the 2003 Cricket World Cup. Part of the capital budget granted by the City to the BCA for 2003/2004, has been used to renovate the cabin, making it into a user-friendly and functional environmental centre, complete with facilities for disabled persons.

Implementing Agent:
BCA-CEPF Project
WESSA Western Cape
31 The Sanctuary
Kirstenhof, 7945
PO Box 30145, Tokai, 7966
Tel: +27 21 701 1397
Fax: +27 21 701 1399
Email: andy@wessa.wcape.school.za

Join the Friends of BCA

The Friends of BCA are a voluntary group of concerned citizens whose mission it is to contribute to seeing that the BCA is protected and utilised to the benefit of the general public, now and for the future. The group is affiliated to WESSA Western Cape.

You are encouraged to join the Friends of BCA and thereby actively participate in the realisation of the BCA vision. They are holding their AGM on Tuesday 20 April 2004 at 19:30 at the BCA EE Centre at Eerstesteen. Please contact Louis Raubenheimer on (021) 554 2221 or 0826515437, or email lraubenh@mweb.co.za

If you would like more information on the BCA or are interested in becoming involved, please contact:
Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa: Western Cape Region
Michelle Preen
Tel: (021) 701 1397
Fax: (021) 701 1399
michelle@wessa.wcape.school.za

Environmental Management, City of Cape Town
Joanne Jackson
Tel: (021) 487 2814
Fax: (021) 487 2255
joanne.jackson@capetown.gov.za

City of Cape Town, Blaauwberg Administration
Pat Titmuss
Tel: (021) 550 1096
Fax: (021) 550 5717
pat.titmuss@capetown.gov.za

BCA EE Centre bookings and Nature Conservation staff
Tel: (021) 554 0957
bca@sybaweb.co.za