

Verlorenvlei Coalition update report 26 June 2009

Thank you to all who have joined the Verlorenvlei Coalition. You have shown that South Africa has a healthy and participatory civil society, and that as citizens we've had enough of threats to our existence. We claim the right to due process and to government's ability to make fair and responsible decisions which protect our rights as upheld in the Constitution, the highest law in the land.

Since forming the *Verlorenvallei Coalition* at the end of April, we've chosen to change our name to the *Verlorenvlei Coalition*, to avoid confusion with the *Verlorenvallei* in Mpumalanga, which happens to be another Ramsar wetland.

The Minerals and Petroleum Resources Development Act (MPRDA) provides for two parallel processes in terms of a mining application:

1. Public participation process driven by the mining applicant – we had until *1 June 2009* to respond to the Draft Scoping Report as compiled by Withers Environmental Consultants. A comprehensive response (62 pages) went in on behalf of the Verlorenvlei Coalition. Numerous individual responses went in from a wide range of stakeholders.
2. A delegation from the Coalition was also called upon to present our objections to the proposed Riviera Tungsten Mine at the Department of Mining's Regional Offices in Cape Town on *12 June 2009*. The objections were heard by the Regional Mining Development and Environmental Committee (RMDEC), a committee which includes the Regional Manager of the Department of Mining (the Chairperson) (*this is the person who will first decide whether to grant the mining right or not*), the Principal Inspector of Mines for the region, representatives of relevant government departments in the national, provincial and local government spheres (notably Departments of Agriculture, Water affairs, Environmental affairs, Cape Nature).

For the Verlorenvlei Coalition, the following immediate priorities are receiving attention:

Setting up Coalition structures

- A working committee has been elected, with Dr Bennie van der Merwe as Chairman and Garry Sheard as Vice-chairman.
- Registering the Coalition as a legal entity with an appropriate constitution.
- Establishing the Friends of the Verlorenvlei, which will be the exclusively conservation arm of the Coalition.

Short-term goal

- To oppose *any* attempts to mine in the Moutonshoek Valley. We believe this is an inappropriate form of development for the area and will negatively affect our livelihoods, our heritage, our social fabric, the value of our land, water resources, food security and the beauty and health of the natural environment.

Long-term goals

- To create a sustainable development plan incorporating farming, tourism and other appropriate industries for the whole area from Piketberg to Elands Bay, including the ecologically crucial Ramsar-site of the Verlorenvlei estuary.
- To create structures which will further help to uplift and develop previously disadvantaged communities.
- To apply for Biosphere Reserve status for the catchment to enable its conservation and sustainable use.

Publicity and recruitment

- Media coverage – keeping the public aware of the applications to mine in a productive and fertile valley in the Sandveld (to date: Carte Blanche, 50/50, RSG, SAFM, Die Burger, Die Weslander, Die Herald, The Cape Times, The Argus, Die Beeld, The Sunday Times, Noseweek, Mining Weekly, Facebook-groups and numerous other websites)
- Communication with members, especially as represented in the different geographic regions covered by the Coalition.
- Keeping members informed about new developments, and sharing facts as these emerge.
- Producing a DVD and brochure to tell the story of threats to the Verlorenvlei and its catchment area.
- Producing T-shirts and stickers with our logo and slogans.
- Planning road shows to bring the Coalition to you!

Membership

We have received support and help from all over the world. To date more than 800 individual members and about 40 organisations have registered with the Coalition. We need you to join us. Your membership alone makes a difference. Please add your name to our growing list of members.

To join the Verlorenvlei Coalition either email Kerry Kruger at kerry@devs.co.za or you may post your name and address and phone number to Verlorenvlei Coalition, P O Box 75, REDELINGHUYS, 8105 or fax the information to 0865244536.

Visit www.verlorenvlei.co.za for more information.