

FOSAF NORTHERN REGION CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR THE 2025/6 PERIOD.

1. Finances

Presently Northern Region has R38 000 in the current account and R45 000 in a Savings account. R16 000 was donated to the Greater Lakenvlei Protected Environment towards erecting a new set of large signboards advertising the presence of a protected area. Millstream in Dullstroom are to be thanked for the ongoing financial support.

2. Membership.

Once again, the TFFC alone participated in the club membership scheme where at least 50% of the club membership must join to qualify. This brought in about R17 000 for the FOSAF National account.

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), Peter Arderne (secretary), Vicki Arderne (bookkeeper), Jonty Scott, Warren van Tonder and Martin Rudman and Lance Potgieter. Andy Lawler, who was vice-chairman, relocated to the Western Cape.

4. Route 56 Partnership Proposal.

Although this proposal originated from Kokstad Tourism which is in the Eastern Cape and is close to the Natal border the matter was handled by NR as it was an area of interest for the monthly flyfishing reports where we have had no cooperation in the past despite the potential for trout fishing in the EG area. The proposal suggested that FOSAF enter partnership with Kokstad Tourism to promote the flyfishing in the area and in the southern end (Maclear/Rhodes/Barkly East) and in the north in Underberg. As FOSAF do not have the infrastructure for a partnership and none of the 4 clubs at either end of the route have any interest in the proposal FOSAF declined the invitation. However, it was suggested that we could include the EG area in our monthly reports if information was received on a regular basis. No response has been received from Kokstad Tourism.

5. RAUFFFF meetings.

Two very successful meetings were held by Mission Flymag in our Region. The first was at the Bryanston Country Club on 20/08/2026 and attended by Chris Williams and Jonty Scott and the second at the Zwartkops Club on 21/08/2026 and was attended by Warren van Tonder.

6. The Greater Lakenvlei Protected Environment Landowner's Association (GLPELA).

NR has strongly supported GLPELA since the protected area was declared in 2017 and expanded in 2023. The Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency identified the area for protection because of its environmental importance and the increasing threat from mining. The 21000-ha area at least 17 fly-fishing destinations or syndicates and it is probable that this area will be further expanded in the next few years.

The GLPELA which is also strongly supported by the MTPA, BirdLife SA, EWT and the Dullstroom Business & Tourism Association is the prime coordinator of action against and objections to the continuing stream of applications to prospect or mine both within the GLPE, its 1km buffer zone and further afield. Unfortunately, the MTPA's land use scientist who was a key official responsible for assessing these applications in the province and who was based in

Dullstroom retired last year. Because of financial restraints he has not been replaced. In addition, the highly experienced wetland scientist retires this month.

7. Northern Region Projects.

a. Books

Although sales to angling stores have virtually ceased, a reasonable number of books are still supplied to FOSAF members at discounted prices. These sales accrue to the National account. Stock is now fairly low, and we expect some titles, including Volume 4, to sell out within the next 24 months.

b. Communications: Website and X (Facebook)

We now have over 4,8 K followers on Facebook primarily as a result of the monthly flyfishing reports by species (trout, yellowfish & saltwater) and FOSAF fly of the month which have links to the website. This has resulted in a steady growth in viewership of the site. We are always looking for new contributors for fly of the month.

The flyfishing monthly reports total 20 of which 9 are trout areas, 7 saltwater and 4 yellowfish. In order to compile these reports at least 30 correspondents are contacted.

c. The Vaal River Crisis.

Despite no governmental backing, NGO programmes such as biocontrol, spraying and removal of invasive water weed are quietly and effectively going about their business. The Rhodes University Centre Biological Control's weevil and hopper breeding/release project on the Vaal continues to be efficient in the ongoing battle against destructive aquatic weeds. The CBC have now set up nearly a dozen Vaal riverside insect rearing stations involving local communities.

The Minister of Water Affairs & Sanitation ostensibly gave 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's as predicted was a smokescreen, as was the DWS/RW's 'Vaal River Anti-Pollution Forum'. The public should have been able to vent their rage via the VRAPF. In reality there is no public access to Top-Secret machinations and manoeuvrings of this clandestine VWC, even if it still exists!

With upcoming elections, the government have scapegoated a fraction of the guilty-as-sin Emfuleni Local Municipality officials. Five of these officials are currently appearing in court on various charges. Witnesses are justifiably scared to testify against the accused, as the corruption network is rife and those involved will protect their nest-egg at any cost.

The 'Vaal Crisis' is out in the open with great public awareness. Sadly 'SAVE The Vaal' can no longer financially sustain their valiant crusade for clean water in the Barrage area of the mid-Vaal. On a positive note, there is ongoing co-ordination between the 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 like-minded proactive as well as with many individual flyfishers. It was heartening to see great interest from flyfishers at our local RAUFFFF screenings. As noted elsewhere, it is our major goal to try and translate the SA flyfishing public's best intentions into concrete FOSAF membership support.

d. Mpumalanga mining crisis.

Thanks to BirdLife SA Lopes Attorneys has taken the WPB Colliery case on a pro bono basis. However, this problem will not be resolved in the short term as illegal mining is rife throughout the country and government appears to have little appetite to tackle the problem. Had the GLPELA won its appeal against the appeal at the Water Tribunal and the coal mining operation been forced to close and rehabilitate the site the illegal transport of sand required for rehab would probably have occurred anyway. As has already been reported a warning was issued to the culprits in October 2025 to halt. When this was ignored, a case was opened at Belfast Police Station and a force comprising of 8 police vehicles and a helicopter raided the site in December but found nothing there. Apparently, all equipment was hidden in a nearby forest after a tip off allegedly by an informant at Belfast SAPS.

Illegal activity resumed 2 weeks after the raid and when the matter was reported to DMRE Compliance they replied that the GLPELA was to ask the SAPS Belfast to follow up with the case that had been opened. SAPS Belfast of course have made it clear that they have no further interest in the matter.

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.

It will be correct to say that despite evidence of criminal activity by miners and illegal miners the response from SAPS, DMRE, DFFE and DWS (In the form of the Inkomati Usuthu Catchment Management Association) is often poor or non-existent.

e. The Northern Trout Association (NTA).

This organisation which strongly supports FOSAF was launched as the Mpumalanga Trout Association in 2015. In 2019 it incorporated the provinces of KZN, Free State, Gauteng and Limpopo and together with FOSAF is a member of Trout SA. Despite the expansion to other northern provinces 90% of the funding still originates from Mpumalanga. 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.

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/TroutSA/NTA and the DFFE regarding the future status of trout the matter will be taken up with the Mpumalanga Tourism & Parks Agency.

The NTA at present has R330 000 in its bank account but it has not had any major expenses since January 2024 when it funded the trip to Cape Town by FOSAF/TroutSA/NTA for discussions with the DFFE as part of the Trout Task Team and for negotiations regarding the draft Aquaculture Development Bill and other matters.

Chris Williams.
Northern Region Chairman.