

FINAL PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

I. BASIC DATA

Organization Name: Regalis Environmental Services CC

Project Title: A vegetation map for the Little Karoo

Project Dates (as stated in the grant agreement): April 1, 2004 – Feb. 28, 2005
(Amended Jan. 26, 2005)

Date of Report (month/year): March 21, 2005

II. OPENING REMARKS

Provide any opening remarks that may assist in the review of this report.

The study area falls within the SKEP identified Little Karoo investment priority area in the Succulent Karoo hotspot.

Until now stakeholders in the region have had no access to information on fine-scale biodiversity patterns or the degree to which it is threatened in this priority conservation region. The main intention of this project was thus to capture and disseminate data on biodiversity patterns in the Little Karoo and to capacitate civil society to provide recommendations on how a pragmatic conservation plan should be developed for the region. The project team believes that we have achieved this goal. It is quite clear that stakeholders in the region accepted the products of this study, but would really like to have the products analyzed further with final outcomes presented to them in simple terms to suit their own needs.

Link to vegetation map: <http://www.elsenburg.com/resources.htm>

III. ACHIEVEMENT OF PROJECT PURPOSE

Project Purpose: To enable landowners, land-managers, environmental conservation agencies and regional planners to take informed decisions on sound land-use practices and when determining priorities for conservation projects in the Little Karoo region

Planned vs. Actual Performance

Indicator	Actual at Completion
Purpose-level:	
<i>Indicator 1: The Department of Agriculture (Western Cape) utilize the data to identify critical resources in their Landcare Areawide Plan for the Little Karoo.</i>	The Dept. Agriculture is currently disseminating the project data to their staff. Some already indicated that they would soon use the data e.g. on occurrence of aquatic units for erosion control projects.
<i>Indicator 2: The Eden and other District Municipalities use the outcomes of this project to develop their Integrated Development and Spatial Development Plans.</i>	The municipalities are aware of the data and will request their consultants to use it when their IDP and SDF plans are updated.
<i>Indicator 3: The Southern Karoo SKEP office,</i>	The Southern Karoo/Gourits Initiative office, via

<i>Gourits and Baviaanskloof Megapark Projects utilize the outcomes of this project to determine priority conservation projects and actions</i>	help from Cape Nature, has already used the data to motivate stewardship projects.
<i>Indicator 4: All agencies active within the Little Karoo use the outcomes of this project via the CPU website to ensure that proposed future development plans within the region will ratify the principals of sustainable utilization of the natural environment.</i>	All the products of this project were provided to the CPU and the Dept of Agriculture to be placed on their websites, as many landowners/managers seem to prefer using the Dept Agriculture website. The availability of the data and how it can be used by landowners/managers was discussed on a 30-minute national radio program and several immediate requests resulted from this discussion.

Describe the success of the project in terms of achieving its intended impact objective and performance indicators.

The main intention of the project has been to gather and collate as much as possible information on the vegetation of the Little Karoo region and to deliver this information to stakeholders at the end of this project. The most important intended impact of this project was to capacitate stakeholders to understand how unusually rich and complex the biodiversity of the Little Karoo environment is.

All the outputs of the project have been met as per the defined performance tracking document. The degree of enthusiasm with which the stakeholders received these products clearly indicates that the main objective of this project has been achieved. It is also clear that many of the products of this project must still be processed further to be in a format that would be most useful to end-users. Several researchers indicated recently that they would like to address the various issues identified by the stakeholders. Perhaps the most fortunate outcome of this project - the building of new alliances and working relationships that could only benefit the Little Karoo region.

Were there any unexpected impacts (positive or negative)?

No.

IV. PROJECT OUTPUTS

Project Outputs: Enter the project outputs from the Logical Framework for the project

Planned vs. Actual Performance

Indicator	Actual at Completion
Output 1: A map of all the vegetation units that occur within the SKEP Little Karoo priority area is available in electronic format for each of the four-tiers of the vegetation classification system.	The vegetation map was successfully completed for the entire domain and is electronically available at all six tiers of the hierarchy developed to classify the vegetation of the area.
<i>Indicator 1.1 The area must be mapped systematically in three phases and the electronically captured data of each mapped sector verified before the next area is mapped.</i>	This systematic approach was followed and the outputs of each area were verified before the next area was mapped.
<i>Indicator 1.2 The electronically captured data must be submitted every two months to the project consultant (Prof R. Cowling) to comment on the quality of the products delivered.</i>	Results were regularly forwarded to the project supervisor (Prof. Cowling) and he provided written comments that were included in the quarterly reports to CEPF.
<i>Indicator 1.3 The quality of the final products (electronic map and descriptive document) will be</i>	The final products were presented to about 60 delegates at the final workshop. These delegates

<i>reviewed by an independent person.</i>	indicated they are satisfied with the quality of the products and it was thus not deemed necessary to submit the products to another independent reviewer.
Output 2: A document is available in which the four-tier classification system is described and in which diagnostic descriptions and illustrations are provided for all the vegetation units that have been mapped in the Little Karoo area.	The document has been compiled and is available in electronic format. Hard copies of the document have also been forwarded to CEPF and the local SKEP and Cape Nature offices.
<i>Indicator 2.1 The classification system and vegetation unit descriptions must be documented systematically for each of the three phases of the field mapping work and these must be reviewed every two months by the project advisor (Prof R. Cowling).</i>	Results of the project were forwarded regularly to the project supervisor (Prof. Cowling) and he periodically scrutinized results in the field. He also provided written comments of his opinion on the progress of the project in quarterly reports already submitted to CEPF.
Output 3: The vegetation transformation layers proposed by related project (TERU, UPE) have been ground truthed.	The proposed transformation data layers have been ground truthed for most of the domain.
<i>Indicator 3.1 All the proposed transformation layers must be ground truthed systematically while the vegetation units are sampled in the field.</i>	The executant of the transformation project changed at the start of this project. A new executant was found and for technical reasons it was decided that he should only start to develop the transformation layer data once the vegetation map has been completed. The original ground truthing procedure could thus not be followed. Most of the transformation data have already been ground truthed and the results communicated to the project executant. The process of refining the final results is still ongoing.
Output 4: The way in which a fine-scale conservation plan will be developed for the critical natural capital of the Little Karoo is agreed upon by all the relevant stakeholders.	To ensure maximum participation, stakeholders were rather asked how they want the products of this project to be processed further, than how they want a conservation plan to be developed. They agreed that a conservation plan is required, but indicated that the outcomes of such a study must be in a format that can be used easily by all. They also indicated that the vegetation map and associated data should be disseminated in various formats to ensure that all the interested and affected parties in the region can use it.
<i>Indicator 4.1 At the end of this project a workshop will be held to inform all the main stakeholders about the outcomes of this project and to ask them to indicate how they want a fine-scale conservation plan to be developed to safeguard the critical natural capital of the Little Karoo area.</i>	The workshop was well attended by delegates from many walks of life (more than 60 delegates). Minutes of the meeting were kept and a summary of the recommendations by the stakeholders is provided as in the final report of this project.

Describe the success of the project in terms of delivering the intended outputs.

The biggest success of this project is probably the fact that the stakeholders received the vegetation map with enthusiasm and that they were keen to provide recommendations on how this project should proceed.

Another major success is the fact that several researchers indicated that they would like to address some of the needs identified by the stakeholders. The originally envisaged second phase to this project is thus unfolding on its own steam. The unexpected latter development is, however, largely due to hard work from the project supervisor (Prof. Cowling).

Were any outputs unrealized? If so, how has this affected the overall impact of the project?

No, all the major outputs were realized.

V. SAFEGUARD POLICY ASSESSMENTS

Provide a summary of the implementation of any required action toward the environmental and social safeguard policies within the project.

Not applicable.

VI. LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE PROJECT

Describe any lessons learned during the various phases of the project. Consider lessons both for future projects, as well as for CEPF's future performance.

Once some stakeholders learn that they live in a “hotspot” and they hear that useful new information is available they develop a dire need to attain this information. In projects where new data are gathered about the biodiversity of a hotspot, a project executant should plan to disseminate information to stakeholders.

Notwithstanding the fact that I have done botanical surveys for many years, I once again learned that one tends to underestimate costs and time required when planning a **large** vegetation-mapping project. For future CEPF funded vegetation-mapping projects I would suggest a warning to such project applicants. Even when they plan the project carefully they may require up to 33% more time to complete the project.

It is a good idea to present the final outcomes of a project of this nature to the affected civil society of the region. Their comments somehow brings one back to reality very rapidly. A project executant may want to move forward rapidly, as he/she understands the needs of the environment, but one rarely also fully understand the needs of the affected people. So, always consider stakeholder opinion before you move on with a project.

Project Design Process: (aspects of the project design that contributed to its success/failure)

In a project of this nature, where the outcomes of a natural science study must be compatible with constraints set by the electronic world, the project team members must understand each others needs very well at the beginning of the project. This is vital to ensure that an excellent working relationship is retained and the best possible end product is delivered. It is also a good idea to appoint an independent project supervisor, even if it does not seem necessary. The function of an independent project supervisor is to keep the project team at the tips of their toes, by indicating at an early stage where things are going wrong and by retaining enthusiasm for the project.

Project Execution: (aspects of the project execution that contributed to its success/failure)

In projects where large amounts of information are dealt with one must be very systematic and consistent in the way the data are captured and processed. It may be painful in the beginning of the project, but once you have to synthesize all the information at the end of the project, you will be eternally grateful for a systematic approach in the study.

VII. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It was only a pleasure to work with CEPF as a funding organization in this project. I truly wish to thank all the CEPF personnel who provided friendly guidance whenever I needed support in this project. The kind co-operation (and patience) of Nina Marshall, Yantee Neufville and Jim Ragle is gratefully acknowledged.

VI. INFORMATION SHARING

CEPF aims to increase sharing of experiences, lessons learned and results among our grant recipients and the wider conservation and donor communities. One way we do this is by making the text of final project completion reports available on our Web site, www.cepf.net, and by marketing these reports in our newsletter and other communications. Please indicate whether you would agree to publicly sharing your final project report with others in this way.

Yes _____

No _____

If yes, please also complete the following:

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