

Major environmental breakthrough on hand

With the establishment of the St Blaize Biodiversity Forum (SBBDF) during August 2008, to ensure the survival of the extremely sensitive and vulnerable coastal belt of Mossel Bay, a major environmental breakthrough is on hand.

This coastal belt stretches from the Maalgate River, close to Glentana in the east to the Gourits River in the west - covering a distance of almost 200 km.

The SBBDF

The SBBDF was established by a few well-known conservation conscious active individuals, scientists and organizations in order to ensure that an overall strategy is in place that will ensure sustainable utilization of its natural and cultural resources - for the benefit of all its communities.

Under threat

This extremely sensitive coastal belt in particular is under severe threat and pressure due to irresponsible developments which involve mis- or badly informed authorities, immature and uneducated historical, agricultural and fishing practices, unwise harvesting concessions, lack of effective environmental law enforcement, a lack of the will and education of communities and individuals in the broader sense to conserve what rightfully belongs to everybody.

About 55 conservation bodies and initiatives within the Mossel Bay-area have been approached by the SBBDF, who would take ownership and assist in sustainably managing natural- and cultural assets.

The five pillars

The five pillars of the forum are: Marine; floral; fauna; archaeological assets and the community.

Website

An SBBDF website is being designed that will allow each entity to capture site specific data (under those categories) and feed it into the website. This will be monitored over many years and assist the SBBDF with the help from local, provincial and national authorities to manage and advise on any future developments or concessions that might encroach or destroy natural- and cultural assets.

Overall objective

The overall objective is to ensure that all communities gain long term benefits from these major tourist attractions. The proposed PetroSA LNG-project at Vleesbaai or Voorbaai and the proposed I&J fish farm off the Little Brak River Mouth are present issues being tackled by the SBBDF.

Members

All members will receive adequate training, education and awareness to improve the protection-strategies throughout the

Mossel Bay-area. This would assist towards a healthy and sustainable coastal strip which will allow increased tourism and sustainable work opportunities.

St Blaize conservancy

The process of covering the coastline with conservancies is in full swing with the re-regi-

stration of the St Blaize conservancy as well as identifying the gaps along the coastline and assisting the landowners to get set.

Any other initiative that is interested, can contact Aiden Beck at 044 693 3429, 082 30 90846 or send an e-mail to conservationtrust@vodamail.co.za.