

# CEPF FINAL PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

## I. BASIC DATA

**Organization Legal Name:** Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa: Eastern Province

**Project Title (as stated in the grant agreement):** The St. Francis Conservancy Project

**Implementation Partners for this Project:**

**Project Dates (as stated in the grant agreement):** August 1, 2003 – July 31, 2005

**Date of Report (month/year):** October 2005

## II. OPENING REMARKS

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

The St Francis Conservancy Project aimed to create a private landowner conservation initiative, the St Francis Conservancy, in the globally significant St Francis area in a way that benefits those involved while also conserving the area's unique biodiversity and archaeology.

The project involved promoting the conservancy concept to potential stakeholders and then supporting these individuals in the creation and development of the institution. The project team also supported the conservancy in developing environmental management guidelines for the area and in developing projects and funding applications.

The report below is an attempt to share some of our experiences in the hope that executants of similar projects will be able to gain from what we have learned.

## III. ACHIEVEMENT OF PROJECT PURPOSE

**Project Purpose:** Private landowners within the south-eastern lowlands of the Cape Floral Kingdom become directly and actively involved in conserving priority biodiversity through the establishment and management of the St Francis Conservancy.

## Planned vs. Actual Performance

Indicator	Actual at Completion
<b>Purpose-level:</b>	
A conservancy is established at Cape St Francis	The St Francis Conservancy was established.
The St Francis Conservancy continues to expand as new landowners join the initiative	The Conservancy has grown beyond its envisaged area. It now includes the St Francis Field, the St Francis Links and a number of landowners from along the Kromme River. The Conservancy may continue to expand, possibly reaching the Huisklip Nature Reserve in the west.
Landowners are involved in managing the St Francis Conservancy	Landowners have taken responsibility for the management of the Conservancy.
The long-term conservation status of the St Francis Conservancy, or of pockets of land within the conservancy, is increased	An attempt to establish a Private Contract Reserve within the Conservancy did not reach fruition on completion of the project. Landowners have agreed in principle, but have been reluctant to move forward in developing the mechanisms for this.
Government (both local and provincial) recognises, through the outcomes of the project, that private conservation is a valuable tool for meeting biodiversity conservation targets, and allocates resources accordingly	This was somewhat ambitious. Despite concerted effort, no great strides were made in convincing provincial and local government agencies of the importance of private landowner conservation.

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

The project was moderately successful in achieving its objectives. Below I describe our successes, some problems that we faced (and still face), why these problems came about, what needs to happen to address these problems and some areas where we failed to achieve our objectives.

### **Successes**

***Establishment of the Conservancy*** – a conservancy was established in the Cape St Francis area. About 90% of the landowners within the planning area are now members of the Conservancy. In fact, the Conservancy has grown to incorporate properties beyond the planning area. The Conservancy is currently about 5 600 ha, consisting of about 70 properties and 50 landowners.

***Handing over responsibility for the Conservancy to the landowners*** – the Conservancy is now managed entirely by its landowners and stakeholders and is now at a point where it can undertake projects.

**Initiating conservation management on the Conservancy** – the Conservancy’s management committee is developing a project to clear alien plants on the Conservancy. The Conservancy is anxiously awaiting the outcome of a funding proposal to the Working for Water Programme.

**Conciliation between Eskom and the surrounding community** – Eskom, our national energy generator, owns land at St Francis that has been earmarked for a future nuclear site. The controversial nature of nuclear energy generation creates the potential for tension between Eskom and the surrounding communities. However the Conservancy has provided a platform for constructive engagement for Eskom and the surrounding landowners.

**Influencing development** – Several developments that purport to be environmentally-sensitive have been proposed for the St Francis area. Some of these developments have the potential to result in net conservation gains and have been invited onto the Conservancy. In this way, the Conservancy has positively influenced developments from an early stage and sought compromises that will benefit the environment and the developer.

**Relationships with sympathetic organisations** – participation in the Conservancy has resulted in good relationships and partnerships between the Conservancy and other organisations (such as the Fourcade Botanical Group, the CREW Programme, the Friends of St Francis Nature Areas, St Francis Coastal Open Space System and the Kromme Trust).

**Developing management guidelines for the area** – detailed plans were developed to guide the management of the area. Data were collected on various aspects relating to the environment (including data on plant and animal species, rare and endemic species, natural habitats) and its management (data on alien plant density and distribution, roads and infrastructure). These data were used as the basis for developing sound management guidelines for the area.

**The development of a decision-support system to allocate resources to alien plant control** – a multi-criteria decision analysis model was developed to assist landowners in allocating resources towards alien plant control. This system allows for funding to be spent in a way that is understandable, unbiased, transparent and scientifically rigorous, minimizing the potential for conflict amongst landowners. This system will direct mechanical clearing of alien plants on the Conservancy and will compliment the action of the biological control agents already released.

**Conservancy providing service to the community** – Conservancy members have arranged, on their own accord, educational field trips and other activities (e.g. a snare hunt) for members of the public.

**A model for securing biodiversity on private land** – the project resulted in the development of a model for securing the biodiversity within the Conservancy: a Private Contract Reserve. Although the relevant landowners agreed in principle to the establishment of the Contract Reserve, this could not be accomplished during the duration of the project – landowners needed more time to become comfortable with the idea of entering into contracts with each other. Nonetheless, the concept has been well-received and the Contract Reserve may well develop with time.

## Problems

Despite the apparent success, the project had its share of challenges and the continued existence of the Conservancy is not guaranteed. Several interrelated issues negatively affected the project.

**Uncertainty** – landowners were initially sceptical of the Conservancy and were uncertain of the implications of their involvement. Despite reassurances, some landowners continued to be suspicious of the Conservancy, thinking that membership would entail severe restrictions on their activities.

**Communication break-downs** – despite a concerted effort (regular newsletters, websites), we were unable to effectively communicate with all landowners.

**Lack of participation (free-riding)** – most landowners have not contributed their fair share to the development of the Conservancy and did not participate directly in the project. The growth of the Conservancy was due to the work of a small subset of committed individuals.

**Lack of buy-in** – we feel that many landowners have not ‘bought-into’ the project’s vision and do not fully see the opportunities and benefits of a properly functioning conservancy.

**Internal conflict and lack of group cohesion** – even within pre-existing landowner groupings there is low group cohesion and internal conflicts have created rifts between landowners.

**Lethargy and apathy** – landowners have been slow to respond to requests for information and assistance.

**Committee members not carrying out their responsibilities** – certain landowners in positions of authority did not carry out their responsibilities.

**Using the Conservancy to pursue other agendas** – for example, certain landowner groups have used their membership of the Conservancy to market themselves as being environmentally conscious, often without having made a meaningful contribution to the Conservancy.

**Slow progress** – it took an inordinate amount of time for the Conservancy to move from one point to the next in its development.

**Indecisiveness** – decisions are not reached quickly and easily.

**Burnout** – certain individuals who were initially enthusiastic about the project have become disinterested over time.

## Why these problems came about

I suspect the above has happened for a number of related reasons:

- The fluid nature of the conservancy model leaves a lot of room for uncertainty and this was exacerbated by a lack of experience amongst stakeholders and implementers in this type of organisation.

- Direct contact between landowners is limited because most are not local or resident. Relationships between landowners are not very well developed and there was little established trust between landowners on project initiation.
- Landowner well-being and livelihoods are not linked to their Conservancy properties. Landowners do not depend on the land to make a living and thus its status is not of overriding concern to them.
- Some landowners have demanding careers and have little time to dedicate to extramural pursuits. They see the Conservancy as a distraction and not an important issue in their daily lives.
- Landowners do not perceive meaningful benefit from their involvement in the Conservancy and there is not sufficient incentive for them to be involved. Externally-derived incentives for private landowner conservation (e.g. rates exclusions) have not materialised and the internally-derived benefits from participating in a conservancy require work before they can be unlocked.
- Landowners perceive very high transaction costs (e.g. attending regular meetings) for participating in the Conservancy.
- Landowners believe that the Conservancy is mostly about talking and not about doing.
- Landowners have differing value systems and some are not overly concerned with the environment and thus do not respond as strongly to the vision of the Conservancy
- Some landowners who do subscribe to the Conservancy's vision do not believe their participation is required because the necessary work is already being done by external parties (i.e. WESSA)
- Landowners do not always know what is expected of them.
- Leadership of the Conservancy has focussed on inclusiveness and diplomacy at the expense of being firm and decisive.
- Landowners in positions of authority have not been held accountable for their responsibilities.
- There have been, as yet, no sanctions for members who do not contribute and participate.

### **What needs to happen to address these problems**

I feel that these problems can be overcome and the robustness of the Conservancy as an organisation can be improved by addressing the following issues.

***Stronger leadership*** – the existing leadership of the Conservancy must become more forceful and decisive, whilst balancing this with participation and inclusiveness in decision-making. If this is not possible, the Conservancy membership should consider electing new leaders.

***More efficient management*** – linked to the above point, the management of the Conservancy must be as efficient as possible. The membership should not perceive massive transaction costs for their involvement in the Conservancy. Meetings should be as brief as practicable and not be too frequent.

***A tougher stance*** – sanctions need to be developed for landowners and landowner groups that are not 'pulling their weight'. This might even mean that certain landowners and landowner groups should be expelled from the Conservancy. Landowners who are not prepared to contribute to the Conservancy should not expect to benefit from it either.

***A clear understanding of everybody's roles and responsibilities*** – we have already developed a guideline document that clearly outlines suggested roles and responsibilities of all the Conservancy's stakeholders. This document needs to be revisited and members should agree to adhere to their responsibilities.

***A focus on relationships*** – improved relationships should be nurtured between members. The positive impact of good relationships on improving trust and reducing transaction costs can only lead to a stronger Conservancy. Relationships and trust are best developed through collaboration between members. As such, the Conservancy should seek to implement projects that involve active participation of many members. The Conservancy should also seek to host 'get-togethers' for members.

***Initiate action*** – the Conservancy must start undertaking observable actions (e.g. eradicating aliens) so that members can see that it is not merely a 'talk shop'.

## **Failures**

***Convincing government decision-makers of the importance of conservation*** – our meetings with higher-level government representatives very clearly showed us that the importance of conservation is not appreciated. Politicians especially seem to regard conservation as a pursuit of the wealthy white elite and as unimportant compared to more-pressing social and economic concerns. In our encounters with these individuals, the value of biodiversity was understood only in terms of aesthetics and not for more compelling reasons, such as the ecosystem services it provides.

***Convincing conservation agency officials of the importance of private landowner conservation*** – meetings with provincial conservation agency officials to promote private landowner conservation did not achieve the desired result. Private landowner conservation is still very much neglected by provincial conservation authorities and no strategy for improved private landowner conservation has emerged.

## ***Were there any unexpected impacts (positive or negative)?***

***Eastern Cape Conservancy Association*** – the project led to the development of the Eastern Cape Conservancy Association. This fledgling association provides a vehicle for conservancies to communicate with each other and to coordinate their activities. The association also provides conservancies with a single voice to lobby for provincial and national private landowner conservation issues (through linkages with the national association). We also hope that the association will provide a mentorship function to support the establishment of new conservancies.

## **IV. PROJECT OUTPUTS**

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

**Planned vs. Actual Performance**

Indicator	Actual at Completion
<b>Output 1:</b> Project awareness is raised amongst stakeholders and potential participants	Awareness of the project amongst local stakeholders was good during the project and on completion. We struggled to communicate regularly with some of the more distant stakeholders.
<b>1.1.</b> Relevant landholders at Cape St Francis informed of the project by the end of August 2003	A series of meetings was held with relevant landowners and landowner groups.
<b>1.2.</b> Other relevant stakeholders (NGO, Government and civil society) identified and informed of the project by end of August 2003	Presentations were given to NGO groups and to relevant government officials and structures.
<b>1.3.</b> Project is presented at seminars and conferences	The project was presented at local (incl. Fynbos Forum, Protected Areas Forum) and international (Society for Conservation Biology) conferences and symposia.
<b>1.4.</b> Articles on the project are regularly submitted to various publications	Articles on the project appeared regularly in various local and national publications.
<b>1.5.</b> A website is designed for the project and the St Francis Conservancy by January 2004	A Conservancy website is operational.
<b>1.6.</b> A project newsletter and mailing list is developed by October 2003	Quarterly project newsletter was distributed.
<b>1.7.</b> A brochure on the project is developed by October 2003	This was subsequently seen as an inefficient means to communicate with stakeholders. Instead, posters were developed for the project and placed at prominent venues.
<b>1.8.</b> Signage is erected at major access points to the proposed St Francis Conservancy by January 2003	Signage was erected at the three main entrances to the Conservancy. This occurred behind schedule due to delays from the roads agency and signage company.
<b>Output 2:</b> Partnerships are formed with agencies and organisations that can assist with the implementation of the project	
<b>2.1.</b> The Kouga Municipality requested to	A representative of the Kouga Municipality serves on the Conservancy

provide logistical support for the project by September 2003	Steering Committee and provides routine support.
<b>2.2.</b> The Cape Conservation Unit (CCU) approached by the end of August 2003 to collaborate on the project, especially with regard to the development and application of incentives	The Unit was approached and Mark Botha accompanied us to meetings with provincial government officials.
<b>2.3.</b> The Forcade Botanical Group approached by the end of October 2003 to assist with data collection	The Fourcade Group assisted with data collection, under the auspices of the CREW Programme.
<b>2.4.</b> The Provincial Department of Economic Affairs, Environment & Tourism (DEAET) approached by end of August 2003 to provide routine assistance. The BCU requests that a DEAET official be assigned to assist in the establishment of the St Francis Conservancy.	A DEAET official serves on the Conservancy's Steering Committee and has assisting in the declaration of the Conservancy.
<b>Output 3:</b> An application is made to formally establish the St Francis Conservancy	
<b>3.1.</b> By September 2003, the BCU negotiates with landowners for their inclusion into the St Francis Conservancy	A series of meetings was held with landowners and landowner groups to negotiate their inclusion in the Conservancy.
<b>3.2.</b> Provincial authority (DEAET) consulted on their requirements for conservancies by September 2003	Provincial policy guidelines were obtained from DEAET.
<b>3.3.</b> By October 2003, information required by DEAET (including: register of members, definition of boundaries) acquired and compiled	This was done, although behind schedule.
<b>3.4.</b> The BCU attempts to establish a committee to govern the St Francis Conservancy - potential committee members are approached by September 2003	A Steering Committee was established.
<b>3.5.</b> Committee assisted in developing and adopting a constitution by November 2003	A constitution, which had undergone two revisions, was developed by a dedicated sub-committee and adopted.
<b>3.6.</b> Committee assisted in developing rules and	We decided to under-emphasize this function of the Conservancy as it would

regulations for members by November 2003	dissuade potential members from joining. It was felt that this was better developed by the landowners themselves, after they had experience of the Conservancy.
<b>3.7.</b> Quarterly meetings are held between the BCU and the St Francis Conservancy Committee	BCU reported to the Steering Committee on a quarterly basis.
<b>3.8.</b> Formal application drafted and submitted to promulgate the St Francis Conservancy by December 2003	Application was submitted behind schedule due to delays in receiving information from landowners.
<b>3.9.</b> Additional landowners are routinely encouraged to join the Conservancy	Meetings were held with landowners who showed an interest in joining the Conservancy.
<b>Output 4:</b> Steps are taken to ensure that the St Francis Conservancy is managed for biodiversity conservation	
<b>4.1.</b> Members of the St Francis Conservancy consulted on Terms of Reference for the development of management plans	Terms of References were developed for the management plans.
<b>4.2.</b> A workshop is held in December 2003 for landowner participation in the development of management plans	A workshop was held in December 2003. The major outcome of this workshop was the development of vision and mission statements for the Conservancy.
<b>4.3.</b> Draft interim management plan, funded by Conservancy members, developed by the end of October 2003	This plan was completed.
<b>4.4.</b> Draft comprehensive management plan developed by July 2004	This was not completed in time. Greater emphasis was needed on the institutional development of the Conservancy and this was not deemed to be a priority at the time. The logic was that it is more important to ensure that the organization continues to exist than it was to have another plan at that stage.
<b>4.5.</b> Draft management plans submitted to landowners and other stakeholders for review and finalisation	Draft management plans were provided to stakeholders to review.
<b>4.6.</b> Procedures developed to audit (rate efficacy of) the management plans by September 2004	This was not done as the plans were not implemented during the project duration.
<b>Output 5:</b> A strategy is developed to	

increase the conservation status of the St Francis Conservancy	
<b>5.1.</b> Cape Conservation Unit consulted, and a strategy is developed to increase conservation status of the Conservancy	The Cape Conservation Unit was consulted. It was determined that the Western Cape model cannot currently be implemented in the Eastern Cape. The project team later developed an alternative strategy to increase the conservation status of the Conservancy through the development of a Private Contract Reserve.
<b>5.2.</b> By May 2004, relevant agencies approached to adopt of a scheme of incentives and conservation options that will promote meaningful private conservation in the SE lowlands	The local authority and provincial authorities were approached, but no meaningful outcome resulted from this.
<b>5.3.</b> Negotiations held with Conservancy landowners for increased conservation commitment in return for incentives	The BCU met with key landowners to discuss their inclusion in the Private Contract Reserve
<b>Output 6:</b> Means to ensure sustainability of the Conservancy, and of the broader Private Conservation Program are investigated	The Conservancy is seeking funding to support its management. The BCU is involved in seeking funding for further private landowner projects.
<b>6.1.</b> Potential funders for the implementation of the management plans identified and approached	Potential funders were identified and several of these have been approached.
<b>6.2.</b> Conservancy Committee assisted in the development of funding applications for the implementation of the management plans	Funding applications have been developed and submitted.
<b>6.3.</b> Conservancy Committee assisted in the identification of mechanisms for generating income through conservation (e.g. through ecotourism) by July 2005	The landowners abandoned the idea of a guided trail through the Conservancy. Several ecotourism ventures have started within the Conservancy, but operate independently of Conservancy structures.
<b>6.4.</b> Potential sources for funding to extend the BCU's involvement with private conservation are identified and approached	The BCU has approached agencies for support.
<b>6.5.</b> By July 2005, funding applications developed for the BCU to continue its involvement in promoting private	Applications have been submitted to various funders.

conservation	
<b>Output 7:</b> Other fledgling private conservation initiatives are supported	.
<b>7.1.</b> Routine assistance provided to other landowners wishing to establish new private conservation initiatives	The BCU has assisted other conservancies and in the establishment of the Eastern Cape Conservancy Association.

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

The project was relatively successful in delivering the intended outputs. The majority of the outputs for the project were achieved ahead of schedule, although the completion of certain outputs lagged behind the stipulated timeframe.

We feel that the physical outputs (such as management plans and guideline documents) provide the Conservancy with a sound basis for continuing their work.

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

Certain outputs were deemed to be, on actual project implementation, less important or effective than what they were perceived to be during project design (e.g. the production of brochures for the project).

Other outputs were later found to be inappropriate once a ‘feel’ had been attained of the working environment of the project (e.g. developing rules and regulations for the Conservancy would have dissuaded landowners from joining and presented the Conservancy as a restrictive body).

We feel that the overall impact of the project was unaffected by this.

**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.***

Please also consult section III for additional lessons learned.

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

***Including stakeholders in project oversight*** – the project steering committee consisted of direct stakeholders and we adjusted the nature of our assistance according to their requirements.

***Underestimating the importance of institutional issues*** – the amount of effort that needed to be invested in developing the institutional structures of the Conservancy was underestimated.

***Too much emphasis on management plans*** – On completion of the project, I feel that the project design placed emphasis on management plans in a way that was slightly overstated and premature in the project timeframe. The strength of a management plan can only be judged on the degree that it gets implemented. The institutional development of the Conservancy, and thus the ability to initiate action, required more emphasis than the development of management guidelines for the Conservancy.

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

***Finding a balance between support and over-nurturing*** – with the view of being of as supportive as possible, the project team took on too much responsibility for certain project actions that could have been done by the landowners themselves. This meant that landowners became overly dependent on the project team and also reduced their perceived need for direct participation.

***Finding a balance between inclusiveness (expanding the Conservancy) and participation (limiting membership to those that contribute)*** – we should have rather worked only with the most willing landowners and excluded ‘luke-warm’ participants. It is better to have a small, well-functioning conservancy than a large, dysfunctional one.

**VII. ADDITIONAL FUNDING**

***Provide details of any additional donors who supported this project and any funding secured for the project as a result of the CEPF grant or success of the project.***

<b>Donor</b>	<b>Type of Funding*</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Eskom	A	R3 000	For the erection of signage around the Conservancy
Lomas Wildlife Protection Trust	A	R10 000	Project development
SA Lotteries Board	A	R10 000	Project development
Rebelsrus Conservation Association	A	R16 667	For development of interim management plan

***\*Additional funding should be reported using the following categories:***

- A*** *Project co-financing (Other donors contribute to the direct costs of this CEPF project)*
- B*** *Complementary funding (Other donors contribute to partner organizations that are working on a project linked with this CEPF funded project)*

- C** *Grantee and Partner leveraging (Other donors contribute to your organization or a partner organization as a direct result of successes with this CEPF funded project.)*
- D** *Regional/Portfolio leveraging (Other donors make large investments in a region because of CEPF investment or successes related to this project.)*

**Provide details of whether this project will continue in the future and if so, how any additional funding already secured or fundraising plans will help ensure its sustainability.**

We would like to continue providing support to the Conservancy. In this regard, we have submitted funding proposals to the value of R60 000 to Eskom, the Tides Foundation, the Levinson Foundation, the CS Fund, the Clairborne Foundation, the Melon Foundation and the Mott Foundation. With this level of funding, we can provide low-level support without taking the lead role (in accordance with our exit-strategy).

If we are successful with these funding applications, we would also like to continue to promote the Private Contract Reserve and support its establishment.

## VIII. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Much more work must be done to create an enabling environment for effective private landowner conservation in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. The opportunity costs for conservation on private land are often overwhelmingly large and landowners need to be given better reasons for becoming stewards of our natural heritage.

## VIII. 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](http://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

If yes, please also complete the following:

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