

Azef Minutes 2009
Graaff-Reinet, 6 October 2009

Apologies: Rhoda Malgas, Noel Oettle, Colleen Seymour, Gareth Hempson and Kirsten Fourie.

Points to add to the agenda: Acacia / Senegalensis name controversy
Minutes of the previous meeting were accepted.

There was a suggestion that minutes in future be posted on the website with a notice to the community to read these.

Website

It was noted that the costs of a web-manager may prevent the continuation of the site in 2010.

Christy Bragg offered to explore cheaper alternatives.

There was general concensus that the website is essential to the persistence of the Forum as it serves to advertise the Forum, and for the sharing of information which allowed for transparency.

It was agreed that the website should be linked to the other bio-regional programmes.

Twelve sponsors will be sought to cover the fee for the twelve months of the year.

Both Renukaroo and the PCU offered to sponor a month each on provision that additional sponsors were found for the remaining 10 months.

Funding

The substantial funding from BIOTA of 30 000 Euros over three years was acknowledged with gratitude. This funding is now complete and new funding needs to be sought.

There was considerable discussion around how to source funding.

It was agreed that funding from big business might compromise the autonomy of the Forum. The Committee runs on a volunteer basis and this limits time available for fund raising. Researchers should include funding for AZEF in bigger grant applications where possible. Tax issues must be kept in mind.

It was agreed that the Committee would explore the matter future, looking for example to GSSA, and devise a more formal marketing strategy.

Special issue

Thanks were noted to Phil Desmet and Colleen Seymour who served as editors on the South African Journal of Science special issue on drought which saw six papers published by members of the AZEF community. The CEPF grant which allowed this was gratefully acknowledged.

Outreach

Peter Carrick ran a workshop for land managers in Namaqualand on restoration and monitoring in May 2009. This was extremely well received. Thanks were extended to Peter.

This year the farmers workshop was held in Buffelshoek in response to a request from the local farmers association. Thanks were extended to Sue Milton and Wallie Stroebel who did give this talk and ran the fieldtrip.

In light of this it was noted that material and information relating to all outreach work must be presented on the website as this could attract donors.

Misspent funds

Efforts to get misspent funds were underway. An agreement around repayment has been signed by both parties and this now needs to be followed through on. It was noted that in the previous minutes an external auditor would be appointed to look into this. This had been done, but as no contract was in place between AZEF and the secretariat, this restricted the investigation and meant the much of the money lost could not be followed up on.

AZEF is now registering as a public benefit organization.

In future a treasurer will be appointed from the Committee to ensure this does not happen again.

Budget

Tessa Oliver presented the budget.

The Forum was pleased to note that we have been able to host meetings that cover their own costs.

Auditing on the Interfaces profit split. – AZEF received R38,321.69 from BotSoc

WESSA happy to get involved with environmental education in 2010 (money?)

The status of the Forum (as a PBO) means it must have 20 months worth of running costs at all times. Fund raising needs to be made a project in itself. What is the AZEF vision, do we need to have a conversation about AZEF and its future plans? A vision would inform how the money is spent (on the different elements).

Does AZEF want to grow?

It was agreed in light of this that the constitution would go on to the website and a comment period allocated. It was noted that an auditor had looked at it with respect to PBO and on that front it was OK.

Date and venue for AZEF 2010

It was agreed by vote the next meeting would be held in Gariiep in the Free State in the first week of October 2010. The 25 anniversary of the Forum would serve as the theme.

Acacia / Senegalensis

AZEF to send a letter in support

Committee for 2010

Maitland Seaman

Mandy Schumann

Marinda Avenant

Leonard Mmoto Masubelele (student rep)

Patrick O'Farrell
And the existing others

Members who had not attended the meeting would be asked to commit to future meetings or step down.

The secretariat to be revisited in 2010 following Tessa Olivers departure.

Timm Hoffman gave a vote of thanks to the committee and AZEF members of another excellent meeting.