

# First conservation easement for Renosterveld

The first conservation easement focused specifically on protecting Renosterveld has been signed in South Africa.

Renosterveld is one of the most endangered types of habitat, with only about 5% remaining, mostly on private land, which makes conservation particularly challenging.

WWF-South Africa signed the agreement with Caledon landowner MG Lötter on 8 February. The Overberg Renosterveld Conservation Trust (ORCT) will manage the easement and provide management support to Lötter and landowners who sign up in future.

Through this innovative form of conservation on private land, part of the largest area of Western Rûens Shale Renosterveld left in the world (370 hectares) will be protected in perpetuity.

Conservation easements or



Keir Lynch of the Overberg Renosterveld Conservation Trust (ORCT), Dr Odette Curtis, Director of ORCT, MG Lötter, landowner and Jan Coetzee, WWF-SA Manager: land programme. PHOTO: Wessel Wessels

servitudes are a fairly new concept in South Africa, although they have been used internationally. A servitude is attached to the title deed, which is binding on the successor in title. A management plan is attached to the servitude, providing support

to landowners and identifying priority management interventions. The ORCT then assists with the implementation of these interventions.

Conservation easements offer landowners an easy and accessible opportunity to

conserve their land. The servitude is placed over the entire farm, with areas demarcated for conservation and agriculture. The land does not need to be rezoned, as is the case with many other protected-area proclamations.

Dr Odette Curtis, Director of the ORCT, said that this signing is the first of hopefully many conservation easements. "Most farmers want to do the right thing with regards to the natural vegetation on their farm. They know that the Renosterveld patches on their properties are where the wildlife is found – giving life to their properties – but they don't always know how to commit to protecting these patches. We hope that other farmers will be inspired by this positive commitment that Lötter has made.

"Through conservation easements, it is now so much easier to commit to protecting your land. We're thrilled to be part of this innovative approach with wonderful partners."

According to Jan Coetzee, WWF-SA's Manager: Land Programme, most of South Africa's biodiversity rests in the hands of private landowners. "For us, it's vital to

ensure our conservation approaches meet the requirements of a landowner managing his land in 2017. Easements meet those requirements."

Odette said the ORCT is working with a range of willing and eager landowners across the Overberg. The aim is to start with protecting the largest remaining areas where the four types of Renosterveld still occur.

The signing was celebrated at Lötter's farm Klipfontein. The event was attended by landowners, LandCare (Department of Agriculture, Western Cape), the ORCT, WWF-South Africa, and the Breede-Gouritz Catchment Management Agency. Funding support has been provided by the Table Mountain Fund and WWF-SA.

**See The Good Guide on P8 for details of Dr Odette Curtis's talk on Renosterveld conservation hosted by Whale Coast Conservation on 21 February.**

# Environmental watchdog declares war on litter

We all know the slogans: "Don't throw stuff away – there is no 'away'," and "There is no Planet B".

These truths have not changed. In fact Planet A is at great risk of being unable to support life as we know it. It is estimated that in 30 years there will be more plastic than fish mass in the sea. We may have to change the popular saying to "There's plenty of trash in the sea".

With these concerns in mind, Whale Coast Conservation (WCC) is running an anti-litter campaign, inspired by White Shark Projects: '21 Days for Change' during March 2017.

"In this time we wish to inspire Whale Coast people to help bring about a healthy environment, free of litter," says Anina Lee of WCC. "We aim to write a new story of stuff, a

story in which we are less obsessed with stuff, acquire less stuff and ultimately discard less stuff. This story is not just about the environment, but also about the people of the Whale Coast. It directly affects the economy of the Overstrand as a 'green' tourist destination, the cost of waste disposal to our local authority and hence our own property values."

WCC will launch the

campaign with an Expo at the Municipal banqueting hall on Wednesday 1 March, from 09:00 to 16:00.

Entrance is free and the Expo will have exhibits on how litter affects our environment and what we can do to reduce the amount of litter that either goes into the environment or ends up in landfills.

The exhibits will include:

1. **Cigarette butts:** In Hermanus smokers throw down about 28 million

butts every year. Cigarette filters do not biodegrade; they are in fact toxic waste and an environmental health threat. The chemicals trapped in the filters leach out into water where the poisons collect in the bodies of marine and freshwater animals, while we in turn eat those animals.

2. **Marine litter:** Everything we discard on land or at sea ends up in the ocean. Plastic litter does not disappear over time – it accumulates in gyres in the world's oceans. Soon there will be a greater mass of plastic than fish in the sea.

3. **Recycling:** We can prevent plastic and other waste from ending up as litter by recycling plastic to make other plastic items. However, it's

expensive to recycle and it uses a lot of energy and water – resources we cannot afford to waste. So the answer is to use less and discard less.

4. **The throw-away society:** What happens to the stuff we throw away? Remember there is no 'away' – everything we discard has to go somewhere. This exhibit will look at how long it takes for things to 'go away', if ever.

5. **Local policy:** Waste disposal comes at a huge cost to both the local authority (our rates) and to the environment. We look at what it costs to build and maintain a landfill site; to transport our waste; and how much water and electricity is used to reprocess paper and plastic.

6. **Changing habits:** There

are easy ways to adapt our lifestyles to reduce the amount of litter entering the environment. Taking bottled water as an example: It takes 3.5 litres of water to make a 1 litre plastic bottle. Besides the high energy cost, the cost to the environment is immeasurable.

7. **Treasure from Trash:** Fabulous artefacts made from discarded materials.
8. **Marine litter:** The litter on our beautiful beaches is not only an eyesore that impacts on tourism, but does untold harm to sea life. Everything we discard carelessly on land or sea ends up in the ocean. Join the Coastal Cleanup Conservation initiative to make a difference in our area.

The anti-litter campaign is funded by the National Lotteries Commission.