



PARTNERING WITH FARMERS

To date, farmers have committed 2 700ha, with several more currently being completed. MG Lötter, a commercial farmer in the Caledon district, who signed 370ha of Renosterveld into conservation, has received assistance with several kilometres of livestock fencing, as a priority intervention identified was the management of livestock grazing.

“For years, I believed my veld had no value when compared with my production lands. I only saw it as a resource to exploit for some limited grazing. I’ve since understood how unique and special this veld is and have committed to looking after it, to the point where I’m not even sure I’ll ever put my sheep on it again,” he says.

Joshua Human and Nico Neethling, who respectively committed 200ha and 140ha along the Sout River, received assistance with ecological burns, alien clearing and livestock fencing.

Schalk Viljoen, with a 200ha easement in the ‘Central Rûens Shale Renosterveld’, south of Riviersonderend, had an ecological burn implemented and received the livestock fencing required to protect the newly burnt Renosterveld and allow it time to rest.

Hennie Eksteen signed up a total of 880ha across two farms on the Breede River. “It doesn’t help to make enemies with the farmers, otherwise you won’t be able to protect the remaining 5% [of Renosterveld]. And that was the attitude with which ORCT approached us: to work in a partnership and be friends with nature, not enemies with each other,” he says.

Eksteen received several kilometres of fencing material, and ORCT has committed to covering the costs of an ecological burn and the labour to erect the fencing as soon as the burn is completed in early 2021.

None of this would be possible without the support of donors such as the World Wide Fund for Nature. Despite these efforts, however, this magnificent ecosystem is teetering on the brink of extinction and the farmers of the Overberg hold its future in their hands. If farmers and conservationists are to see conservation and agriculture survive for the benefit of future generations, it is imperative to continue to work more closely together.

• Email Dr Odette Curtis-Scott at info@overbergrenosterveld.org.za, or phone her on 083 551 3341. ■ FW

1: A piece of intact Renosterveld on the Sout River, housing rare and threatened species, is protected through the Keykas easement with farmer Nico Neethling.

PHOTOS: DR ODETTE CURTIS-SCOTT

2: Populations of the beautiful, endangered *Moraea complanata*, as well as hundreds of hectares of Renosterveld, are protected through the Klipfontein easement with farmer MG Lötter.

3: Joshua Human (left) signs an easement with Overberg Renosterveld Conservation Trust chairperson Dirk van Papendorp.

WESSEL WESSELS

4: Part of the only remaining population of *Polhillia brevicalyx* is protected through the Uitvlucht easement with the Streicher family. The species is found only on the family’s farm, Uitvlucht, and a few neighbouring farms in the Ouka River system.

5: The original extent of the Overberg Renosterveld.