

Herders Fund: 2017/2018 Grazing Season

Lessons Learned

30 July 2018

Background

CSA has been implementing the Herder's fund model in the Eastern Cape under a seasonal grazing agreement approach with seven grazing associations across the catchment. The 'Herders Fund' model was developed and trialed initially in 2005 in Okombe, KZN, under a larger grazing management project of the National Department of Agriculture's LandCare program to address communal natural resource management issues¹. Herders were suggested as a deterrent to ongoing stock theft and fence theft issues in the area (the Dept of Agriculture had donated fences that kept being stolen). Community meetings records reflect that the community agreed *'The fund would assist in the appointment of day-herders and night-herders to oversee maintenance of the grazing programme, control of veld fires, control of fence and stock theft and ensure all individuals followed the grazing rules'..... 'Herders would be compensated through contributions from the community. The community agreed to contribute a minimum amount of R5 towards a herders' fund. Both stock-owners and non-stock owners had to contribute to the fund'*. This process was successful for the extent of the project, however further research² indicates that the herders fund contributions ended when the project ended.

Why a Herders fund?

We at CSA decided to trial the Herders Fund model in the Eastern Cape landscape as a potential sustainability mechanism for ensuring the presence of Ecorangers could persist beyond the lifespan of any DEA Natural Resource Management investment. Ecorangers play an important role in this landscape by co-designing and implementing planned grazing, which allows for ecological recovery of rested areas as well as improved animal health through better grazing access. In the upper uMzimvubu, few grazing areas use fences, and herders are essential in order to manage the movement of livestock and prevent unmanaged or continuous grazing. To date, Ecorangers' salaries have been paid through the DEA NRM programme.

¹ <https://researchspace.ukzn.ac.za/xmlui/handle/10413/5488>

² https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Monique_Salomon/publication/277038624_Keeping_cattle_in_a_changing_rural_landscape_communal_rangeland_management_in_Okhombe_KwaZulu-Natal_South_Africa/links/565eb52f08ae4988a7bd71e8/Keeping-cattle-in-a-changing-rural-landscape-communal-rangeland-management-in-Okhombe-KwaZulu-Natal-South-Africa.pdf

For the 2017/2018 grazing season, CSA trailed the implementation of grazing funds with seven communities in the upper, middle and lower uMzimvubu catchment. We included 'opening of grazing association bank account and contributing to herders fund' as part of the conditions of each Conservation Agreement per grazing association, with the condition and benefit that if this commitment was met, CSA would 'match' the contribution. (In reality, the terms of the conservation agreement were not as explicit as they should have been, resulting in CSA paying significantly higher than 'match' to the compliant grazing associations. More below). During the negotiation process, we explained to the grazing association that the intention for this money was to contribute to herders' salaries. To monitor compliance, we received proof of each grazing associations' bank account details, and proof of deposits for each month that the conservation agreement was valid.

Lessons from implementation

Each grazing association successfully opened their own bank accounts, but not all had demonstrated they had made monthly deposits. Through the monitoring process, we established this was mostly due to the inconvenience of travelling to town monthly to deposit the money – some of the associations made deposits for multiple months at one time. As a result of this, we only conducted our compliance monitoring on this at the end of the project, rather than monthly. This is an important implementation lesson and something for us to consider regarding both the wording of the conservation agreement and the compliance monitoring for next season.

As the conservation agreement wording for each grazing association was not clear enough regarding **how much** the contribution should be, there were variable contributions per month, or per member, based on what they could afford. We were however explicit on the amounts we would 'match by' (R3000 if under 500 cattle, R6000 if over 500 cattle in the Grazing Association). This is also an important lesson for us, to be explicit on amount, an exactly should pay it each month, with point person in the Grazing Association overseeing it and a register if possible. (In the Okhombe example it was R5 per person).

Another interesting experience during implementation is that two grazing associations approached CSA and requested that the 'match funding' for their Herders Funds rather be reallocated to them for vaccines. These communities had both had an outbreak of Lumpy Skin Disease and knowing that they had money due to them as per the conservation agreement, asked if it could be spent on vaccines instead. We agreed to this request and has prompted a reflection that perhaps the fund could be a 'Grazing Association Fund' rather than ringfenced for Herder salaries, however this still then brings the complexities of who pays for Ecorangers if not DEA NRM.

Lessons from the Granting process

Dispersing cash in exchange for conservation agreement compliance is not something that CSA has navigated before in our operations and finance system, and it was a challenge for both CSA and CI to establish how to set up the systems to process this. After exploring several options, CI has agreed to use the Conservation Agreement as a 'contract' in the system, and not require any additional contracts to be signed regarding dispersing the finances. Each Grazing Association is

required to complete a Security Screening Form and an invoice for the benefit, and these documents plus the signed Conservation Agreement are the required for the dispersment to be paid. There are several lessons from this process. Firstly, it is interesting to note that as no additional grant paperwork is required, there is not reporting template that needs to be completed, showing what the Grazing Associations are actually spending the money on. This has been done to date in a verbal manner with CSA staff asking the Grazing Associations during meetings, and them feeding back, but there is no paperwork to reflect in the system beyond showing the money has been dispersed. This demonstrates the need for, and value of, trust between the Implementing Agent and Grazing Association that the money is being well spent.

In general, cash granting is a very time-consuming process from an operational perspective as it requires significant oversight, papertrails and reporting, so we agree that if we can continue with the verbal confirmation this is adequate from a CA perspective, but is worth noting in terms of considering our responsibility to ensure financial literacy and responsibility within the grazing associations.

Suggested way forward

Both landscape and thematic staff agree that some kind savings fund, with grazing associations themselves contributing to it, is a valuable concept to encourage and promote. As we have seen this past grazing season, the money may not always be spent on herders' salaries but is spent on something to do with livestock management and associated rangeland health. Notably, unlike the Okhombe example, those grazing associations who effectively met their grazing fund contributions have continued to do so throughout the winter season, despite the agreement having expired.

We suggest that for the 2018/2019 grazing season we include the Herders Fund component in the negotiation of conservation agreements for only the two villages who successfully implemented them last grazing season, with the following improvements:

- Clarity on exact amount of contribution and from who
- Clarity on monitoring process
- Clarity on allowable spend (e.g. general fund vs for specific things).

We will however continue to verbally encourage all grazing associations to set up such a savings fund, and may consider expanding this component to all conservation agreements in the future after the next trial season.

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