

NACSA · NVBSA



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF  
CONSERVANCIES OF SOUTH AFRICA

# CONSERVANCIES HANDBOOK

[www.nacsa.org.za](http://www.nacsa.org.za)

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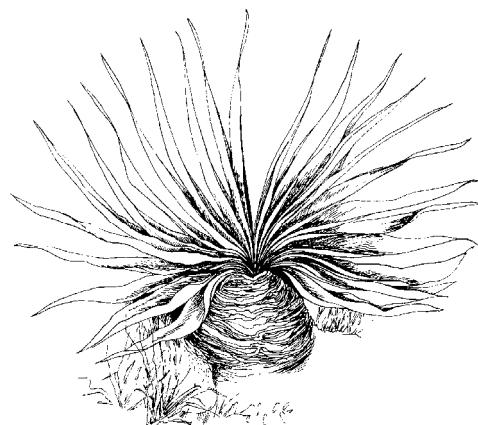
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# **NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVANCIES OF SOUTH AFRICA (NACSA)**

The National Association of Conservancies of South Africa was established in August 2003 to promote community-driven conservation and to network with local and international bodies with similar aims. Its membership consists of two representatives from provincial conservancy associations plus co-opted members as needed. (Until all provinces have established their own conservancy associations, a representative from their provincial government conservation department will serve on NACSA in the interim.)

## **Vision:**

To promote stewardship of natural resources at a community level.

## **NACSA'S AIMS ARE:**

- To guide and support provincial associations in achieving their aims and maintaining consistency and focus.
- To increase, challenge and change current awareness of, and approaches to conservation.
- To promote an ethic that balances conservation, economic development and agriculture.
- To ensure national and provincial legislation advances community-driven conservation initiatives.

## **THE PURPOSE OF A PROVINCIAL ASSOCIATION IS:**

- To gain recognition and support from the public, business and the government in order to conserve the province's natural resources.
- To join forces with other conservation bodies to solve environmental problems.
- To actively encourage the involvement and growth of all communities within their conservancies.
- To develop a strong, united voice for conservation in the province.
- To encourage formation of more rural, urban and industrial conservancies in the province.
- To give support to and network with conservancies in the province and throughout South Africa by sharing information and resources through cooperation and liaison with NACSA.
- To raise awareness among members, resident non-members and the public of the need to conserve our natural resources.

# CONSERVANCIES HANDBOOK

## INTRODUCTION

The first conservancy was established in 1978 in the Balgowan district of the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands and was formed by local farmers with guidance from the then Natal Parks Board. The primary objective was to protect game on the farmlands, this being the first step towards protecting natural areas outside formally protected reserves.

Since then the conservancy concept has grown and is to be found in all provinces in South Africa and in other parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, in a multitude of varying environments.

The purpose of this guidebook is to aid you in:

- Understanding what a conservancy is
- How to start a conservancy
- How to run a conservancy

## WHAT IS A CONSERVANCY?

A conservancy is a registered (with the local Conservation Authority), voluntary association between land users/landowners who co-operatively wish to manage their natural resources in an environmentally friendly manner without necessarily changing the land-use of their properties

This means that a group of individuals, landowners or businesses who are concerned with the state of their environment or who wish to monitor and enhance it, may do so by volunteering to be a part of a committee that is registered with their local nature conservation agency.

“Co-operative environmental management” means that a conservancy manages an area in accordance with sound environmental principles as prescribed by the various laws and policies of the nature conservation authorities in your area. In adopting the conservancy concept, your authorities will be at hand to advise you as to the best environmental practices.

A conservancy need not be vast tracts of land stocked with wild animals. Although there are many rural conservancies that have followed this form, biodiversity can be found in the midst of most urban and even industrial areas. There is no set rule as to how large your conservancy has to be or where it may be. It may be rural, peri-urban, urban, marine, industrial or township. Educational institutions and townhouse complexes can also register as conservancies.

## WHY FORM A CONSERVANCY?

Unfortunately there are many that still believe that “nature” belongs only in formally protected areas and nature reserves. Past environmental ideologies have often focused on the preservation of species with the disturbing result that there are now species to be found in zoological gardens around the world that have very little or no habitat to be reintroduced to! Many rare and endangered species of flora and fauna are actually to be found outside of formally protected areas on privately-owned land. You may not have the “Big Five” where you live but there is a multitude of plants and small creatures to be found around us in many different habitats that are just as important to conserve. With irresponsible development and large scale industrial pollution, it is vital that we all help to conserve our natural assets if we and our natural environment are to survive well into the future.

### SOME EXAMPLES OF HOW A CONSERVANCY CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN PROTECTING OUR ENVIRONMENT:

- Monitoring of river and catchment pollution.
- Aiding the authorities in being a “watchdog” and reporting to them instances of illegal dumping, poaching, barkstripping and illegal harvesting of indigenous plants.
- Invasive alien plant eradication and problem plant control.
- Education and awareness campaigns.
- Monitoring of waste disposal sites.
- Input into environmental impact assessment processes.
- Reporting bad agricultural practices.
- Indigenous landscaping in your district.
- Waste recycling and reduction campaigns in your community.
- Identification and monitoring of rare and endangered species.
- Reducing industrial pollutants.
- Community upliftment projects by finding ecologically and economically viable solutions to issues within previously disadvantaged communities.

### WAYS OF IMPROVING THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT TO ENCOURAGE WILDLIFE BACK INTO OUR URBAN AND INDUSTRIAL AREAS:

- Use and encourage others to plant more indigenous vegetation in their gardens and other more formal landscapes.
- Lobby road and rail authorities to remove invasive vegetation along rail and road verges and centre meridians and plant indigenous instead.
- Lobby local councils to leave or establish indigenous areas within public parks.
- Eliminate toxic air, ground and aquatic emissions.
- Encourage your community and local council to set aside greenbelts so as to insure free movement of wildlife.
- Avoid fencing over rivers.
- Conserving natural wetlands.

## **DOES A CONSERVANCY HAVE ANY LEGAL “CLOUD”?**

No. However with staff shortages and often a lack of resources, your local nature conservation authority can greatly benefit from your vigilance in reporting any environmental contraventions and crimes.

Ensure that your conservancy members are familiar with the basics of your provincial nature conservation ordinance, which the nature conservation officer can explain to you. Issues such as the movement of specially protected plants, sale of indigenous plant material, introduction of game species and procedures when finding or rescuing injured wildlife are often not common knowledge to the “man in the street”. Instances may arise where committed conservancy members may be acting unlawfully under the misguided idea that they are doing their bit for the environment.

## **HOW TO START A CONSERVANCY.**

Canvas as many people in your area as possible with the view to starting up a conservancy. A public meeting is often the easiest and most efficient way to do this. At the same time discuss your proposal with your conservation officer who can help and guide you through the process. Ensure that he/she is invited to your first meeting. Call for nominations of those who wish to serve on the committee, then set aside another date for the new committee to meet and discuss drafting a constitution, establishing future meeting dates, possible projects and a name for your new conservancy.

Once your conservancy has a constitution, make sure that this is submitted to your conservation officer so that your conservancy may be properly registered. REMEMBER IF YOU ARE NOT REGISTERED, THEN YOU ARE NOT YET A PROPERLY CONSTITUTED CONSERVANCY AND YOUR AUTHORITY WILL NOT RECOGNIZE YOU AS SUCH.

It may not always be possible for your conservation officer to attend all your monthly meetings, so ensure that they receive copies of your meeting minutes and that they are invited to all your annual general meetings.

While not mandatory, it is advisable to have a membership fee. By stating the number of “paid up” members when negotiating with authorities or other parties, you add a certain amount of “bargaining power” to your standpoint. Funds are also necessary to pay for basic administration costs such as postage, paper, faxes and telephone calls. You may also need funding for projects, which can be augmented through fundraising efforts or corporate donations.

## HOW TO REGISTER YOUR CONSERVANCY.

Simply hand over a copy of your signed constitution, the minutes of your first committee meeting and your conservancy data sheet to your conservation officer. Some provinces may not use data sheets, so furnish the following information:

- The name of your conservancy.
- Name and contact details of the conservancy secretary (or to whom your correspondence should be posted to).
- Location and area which your conservancy covers (a map with conservancy boundaries shown can suffice).
- Details of any national monuments, rare or endangered species.

Once your provincial authority has ratified this information your conservancy will be issued with a certificate.

## YOUR CONSTITUTION

To help you draw up a constitution we have attached to this document a copy of a pro forma constitution. You can either modify this to suit your particular needs, draw up your own constitution or adopt the proforma constitution verbatim, filling in your relevant details.

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS

The primary reason for hosting an AGM. is the election or re-election of office bearers and to address any amendments to your constitution, should it be necessary. Your AGM. need not be a lengthy affair and it is often common practice to incorporate it with a presentation open to the general public on environmental issues. Opening it to the public also gives you a platform in which to canvass prospective new members.

Notice of an AGM. should be sent out to all general and committee members (usually 14 days or whatever is stipulated in your constitution) and posters and inserts into your local community newspaper advertising the event will help you reach the general public in your area. The following is the accepted agenda for any AGM.:

- Welcome
- Chairman's report
- Treasurer's report
- Election of office bearers
- General discussion





## CONSTITUTION OF THE CONSERVANCY

(Established on.....)

### 1. NAME, AFFILIATION AND GEOGRAPHIC AREA.

The name of the Conservancy is the ..... Conservancy (Hereinafter called the "Conservancy") and shall be registered with GDACE. The area covered by the Conservancy is:.....

### 2. OBJECTS

- (a) To generate interest and active participation by landowners in the conservation of indigenous fauna and flora and the protection of the environment in the area.
- (b) The protection, regulation and improvement of the environment.
- (c) To promote better general security.
- (d) Conservation of natural and man-made resources within development frame works.
- (e) The monitoring of proposed physical development in the area and, if necessary, the objection of the Conservancy thereto.

### 3. MEMBERSHIP

- (a) The Conservancy shall consist of paid-up members (hereinafter referred to as 'Members').
- (b) Membership shall be open to any acceptable persons living or employed in the area.
- (c) The membership of the Conservancy shall consist of Honorary Members, Life Members, Ordinary Members, Junior Members, Corporate Members and Family Members.
- (d) Application for membership shall be by means of written application.
- (e) Membership subscriptions shall be as laid down by the Annual General Meeting, Payment thereof constitutes a paid-up member.
- (f) Membership shall lapse or be terminated after due notice to this effect has been given in writing by either party.

### 4. MANAGEMENT

- (a) The entire management of the Conservancy shall be vested in an elected committee of officers, who shall retire annually at the AGM, but who shall be eligible for re-election.
- (b) The Officers of the Conservancy shall consist of a Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and other elected Committee Members.
- (c) The Committee shall make such rules as are necessary for the efficient running of the Conservancy.

## **5. FINANCE**

- (a) The Conservancy financial year shall end on 28 February annually.
- (b) The Treasurer shall deposit all monies with a Banking Institution approved in terms of the Banks Act. All withdrawals shall be on the signatures of not less than two authorised committee members.
- (c) The Conservancy accounts will be submitted for approval at every AGM.

## **6. MEETINGS**

- (a) Annual General Meeting:
  - (I) The AGM shall be held annually, not later than 30 days after the financial year-end.
  - (ii) Members shall be given 14 days notice of the meeting, together with the notice of the agenda and proposals for consideration thereat.
  - (iii) The business of the AGM shall be:
    - To receive the Chairman's Annual Report;
    - To receive the annual financial report;
    - To conduct general business; and
    - To elect office-bearers.
  - (iv) A quorum shall comprise 40% members.
- (b) Special General Meeting
  - (I) A Special General Meeting may be called by the Committee or upon receipt of a written request therefore signed by not less than 20% members.
  - (ii) Members shall be given 14 days notice of the meeting, and shall be fully advised of the agenda and the purpose of the meeting.
  - (iii) A quorum shall comprise all members present.
- (c) Committee Meeting:
  - (I) Committee meetings shall be held as and when required.
  - (ii) Members shall be given 14 days notice of the meeting.
- (d) Voting
  - (i) Only paid-up members shall vote.
  - (ii) At any meeting the Chairman shall have both an ordinary vote and a casting vote.
- (e) Deferment
  - In the event of there not being a quorum present at a given meeting, that meeting shall be deferred for a period of 7 days. The number of members present at the reconvened meeting shall constitute a quorum.
- (f) Proposals
  - A member, wishing to propose an amendment to the constitution, shall give written notice thereof to the Secretary one month prior to the Annual or Special General Meeting.

## **7. DISSOLUTION**

In the event of the dissolution of the Conservancy, its property and funds shall be disposed of as may be determined by a Special General Meeting called for that purpose.

## **8. ADOPTION**

The above Constitution is adopted by a General Meeting held on:

## EXAMPLE OF A BASIC MANAGEMENT PLAN

Conservancy----- Year-----

| Objective                        | Action               | Tactics                           | Responsibility/Timing                      |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| <u>Rehabilitation</u>            | Wetlands             | Formulate plan                    | Committee                                  |
|                                  | Donga/Soil erosion   | Formulate plan                    |  |
|                                  | Koppie               | Formulate plan                    | Committee                                  |
|                                  | Historic sites       | Identify                          |  |
| <u>Projects</u>                  | Removal of aliens    | Identify                          |  |
|                                  | Clean up campaigns   |                                   |  |
|                                  | Greening             |                                   |  |
|                                  |                      |                                   |  |
| <u>Enviro Centre</u>             | Library              |                                   |  |
|                                  | Maps                 | Update maps                       |  |
|                                  | Books                | Books donated by members          | Members                                    |
|                                  |                      |                                   |  |
| <u>Fund raising</u>              | Events               | Committee to organise             |  |
|                                  | Stall at flea market | Mention in newsletter             | Stall run quarterly. Committee and members |
|                                  | Membership           | Collection of fees                |  |
|                                  | Recycling            | Collect Paper Cans etc for resale | All Members                                |
| <u>Advertising and marketing</u> | External             | Prepare info packs                |  |
|                                  | Intro Pack Maps      | Draw map                          |  |
|                                  | Walks                | Committee to decide on venues     |  |

| Objective                        | Action                              | Tactics   | Responsibility/Timing           |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| <u>Advertising and marketing</u> | Website update                      | Add all events  |                                 |
| <u>Identity</u>                  | A. Signboards                       |   |                                 |
|                                  | B. Quarterly news letter            | Committee members to submit allocated article   |                                 |
|                                  | C. Membership cards                 | Printed and Laminated   |                                 |
|                                  | D. Badges/ Bumper stickers          | Get quotes (design)   | Committee                       |
|                                  | E. Individual signs for each member | Get quotes (design)   | Committee                       |
| <u>Recruit new members</u>       | Secure present members              | Chairperson to visit all members. Letter to welcome new members.                      |                                 |
|                                  | Qualification/ Tenants              | Tenants on property to qualify  |                                 |
|                                  | Honorary membership                 | Committee to approve  | Committee yearly                |
|                                  | Junior environmental groups         | Start environmental club  |                                 |
| -                                | Other                               | Map of area divided among Committee Members to recruit. Existing members also to help | Committee/Members First quarter |
| <u>Other Projects</u>            |                                     |   |                                 |

## GENERAL MOTIVATIONAL TIPS

Commitment from your members is vital to ensure your conservancy achieves its objectives. Here are some general tips to ensure motivation.

### 1. CREATE A NETWORK

Most of us do have telephones, faxes or are on e-mail. You don't have to wait for your next committee meeting to communicate with other members! Keep in touch with one another. If you are experiencing problems with your conservancy duties or need information, speak to the other members or members from neighboring conservancies that may have good advice to dispense.

If there are other conservancies close by, it may be a good idea to approach them with the view to establishing partnerships. This can be in the form of creating a local association of conservancies in close proximity to yours or merely hosting periodic informal gatherings that allow you to get to know your neighbours and exchange information and ideas.

### 2. GATHER INFORMATION

Always keep abreast of any new information concerning nature conservation and environmentally-related issues, or any activities locally that may have an impact on your organization or the conservation of your area. Knowledge is strength!

### 3. GET INVOLVED

There are many other environmental organizations country-wide which host awareness campaigns, seminars and workshops. Local schools may have environmental clubs and other conservancies close by may run outings or events. Getting involved makes you part of a greater community of like-minded, environmentally conscious people. It is also useful for gathering information and making contact with others who may be able to aid or advise you in specific areas of conservation.

New developments in your district may be going through an Environmental Impact Assessment process. It is vital that your conservancy members get involved in adding input to these processes. All too often officials and developers are castigated with "how could you let it happen ?" The real question is how could YOU let it happen?

### 4. MEMBERSHIP

Always work on enlisting new members. The more members you have in your conservancy the bigger your voice will be in your community. Do not become despondent if this process is slow. If you have a small membership then concentrate your efforts on the people you have rather than those you do not have. If the projects your conservancy has undertaken are a success and are sufficiently publicised then people will begin to take an interest in your organization



## 5. TAKE “BITE-SIZED CHUNKS”

Do only what your current potential allows you to do and slowly build up momentum within your conservancy. One small project successfully activated achieves a lot more than many ambitious projects unsuccessfully attempted through weak organization.

## 6. EVALUATE

It is always useful every few months to set aside one of your monthly meetings to evaluate your conservancy’s progress or lack thereof. This helps members to refocus on the objectives of your conservancy. A useful way to do this is through a SWOT. analysis. Some of you may be familiar with this method of evaluation, which is often employed in the corporate environment to assess progress. The word SWOT. is an acronym for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

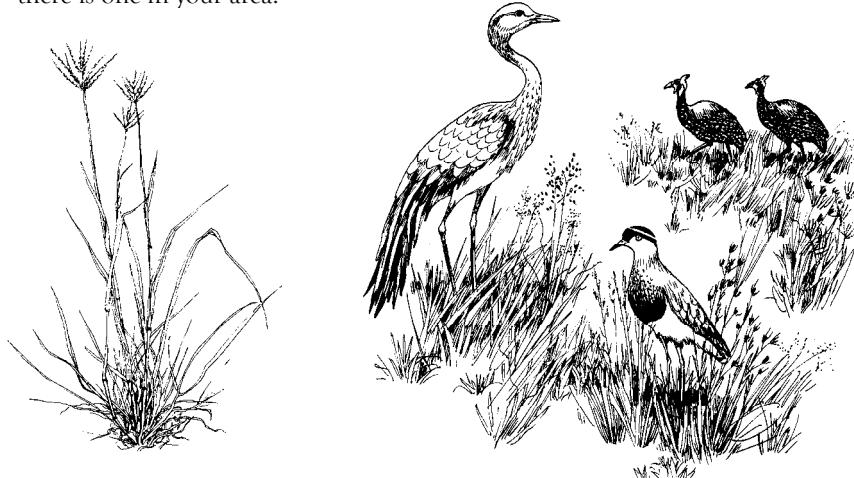
## 7. EXPOSURE

It is important that others see the work that your conservancy does in your community for the following reasons:

- It helps to boost morale as your projects become publicly acknowledged.
- It helps to advertise your existence to the public at large.
- It helps to reinforce public awareness of environmental issues

Here are some ways in which you can gain more exposure for your conservancy:

- If you are lucky enough to have a local community newspaper or chronicle in your area, get the reporters to take photos of your conservancy at work and publish them with an article about what you are up to.
- Put up sign boards next to your projects with captions such as “Your conservancy at work”.
- Organize community socials under the banner of your conservancy. They can be a lot of fun, help you get noticed and could be used as a fundraiser if funds for projects are needed.
- Have membership drives and information tables at your local café or supermarket, if there is one in your area.

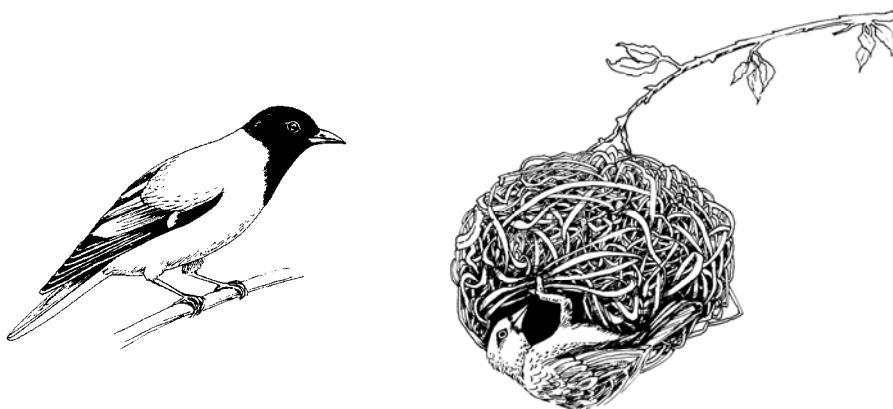


## HOW TO CONDUCT AN EFFICIENT MEETING

It is often said that committee meetings are one of society's greatest time wasters. However, if conducted in an efficient manner, a meeting is the most effective way to mobilize a group of people and to receive and disseminate pertinent information. Many of the problems experienced in demotivated conservancies can often be attributed to a lack of proper focus during meetings.

The following are useful guidelines to achieve maximum benefit from your meetings:

1. Keep within the time limits set. Lengthy meetings destroy concentration and you may find your attendance dwindling at following meetings.
2. Draw up a concise agenda for the proceedings and work strictly from it. Ensure that every one attending the meeting has a copy of the agenda so that they are able to plan their comments and input for agenda items in advance.
3. During discussions on agenda items ensure that the speaker focuses on the issues at hand and does not stray off the topic.
4. Allocate time limits to each speaker.
5. Settle each agenda item with a clear and concise plan of action. Establish what will be done concerning the matter and who will do it before the due date.
6. Always establish a date, time and venue for your next meeting before you enter into general discussion. It has been noted that people who wish to leave a meeting early, do so just before the agenda item headed General.
7. Sum up at the end of the meeting the objectives to be met before the next meeting so that every one has precise knowledge of what is expected of them.
8. Ensure that proper minutes are taken at the meeting. They need to be an accurate account of what was discussed. Keep them concise as people often do not have the time or patience to read through lengthy documents.
9. Inform members at the onset of the meeting that for the sake of expedience you will need to keep strict control of the proceedings. However remember that you are leading volunteers, so be careful not to become dictatorial.

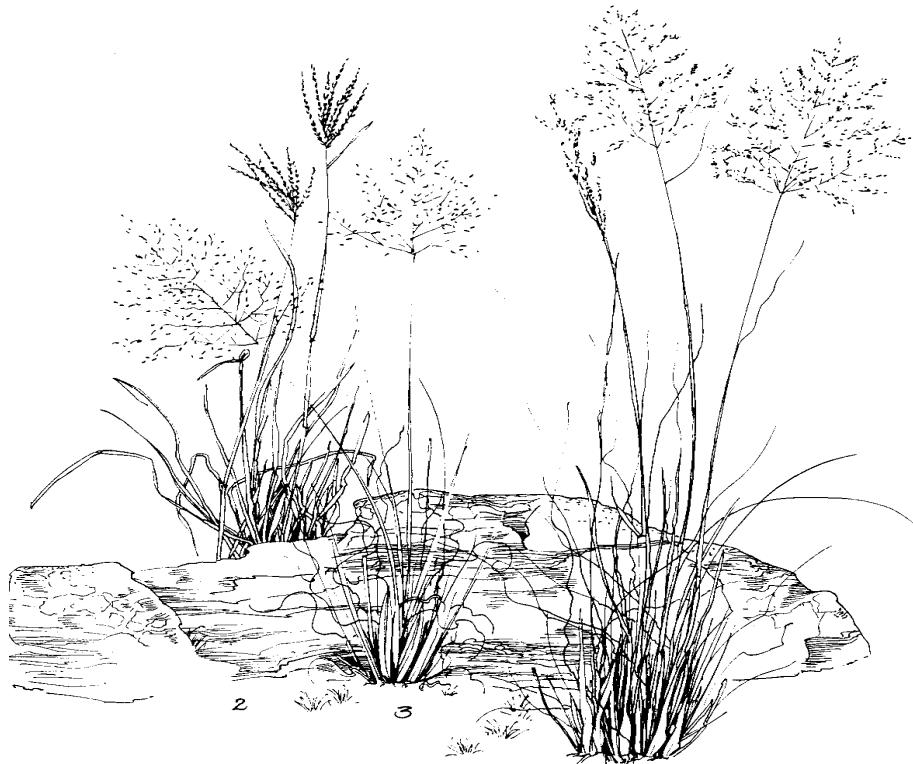


## GENERAL INFORMATION

Always ensure communication between your conservancy and your provincial association.

Although not mandatory, it is advisable to become a member of your provincial association. They are able to advise and guide you if you are experiencing any difficulties. It is also important that our voices are heard on a provincial and national level, especially when government is planning new policies and laws that may have an effect on our environment. For more information on how you can contact your provincial association or NACSA., please consult the list of contact persons.

**For more information on how to obtain further copies of this booklet  
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