

Where are trout now?

A July 2015 update on the trout wars

By Ian Cox



In my last report that appeared in the April 2015 Bobbin ([Where trout are](#)) I reported on the work that has been done to establish the whereabouts of trout. I also reported on the deal that had been struck with government in July 2014 to the effect that trout would not be declared invasive in areas where they already occur outside certain proclaimed nature reserves. I am pleased to announce that Ilan Ix and I met with the Mike Mabuyakhulu who is the KZN MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs on 14 July this year where he confirmed that this agreement has the political support of National government as well as the provinces.

The letter that Ilan and I wrote to the MEC confirming this news and thanking him and the KZN Premier for championing the trout cause can be accessed by clicking [here](#).

Gerrie Van Der Merwe who is chairman of Trout South Africa was asked to meet with the Mpumalanga Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Land and Environmental Affairs (DARDLEA) and the Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Authority (MTPA) within a couple of days of this meeting to talk about issues challenging trout aquaculture in that province. I was asked to make a presentation on this issue.

We do not know how lucky we are in KZN that the trout value chain is strongly supported in this province by the ANC government. It recognises the valuable contribution that the trout value chain is making to the health and wellbeing of KZN's people. We have much to thank organisations such as Trout SA, FOSAF, The Kamberg Farmers Association, the NFFC and the KZN Fly Fishers Association that this is so. The trout value chain is largely left alone as a result of their efforts and the common sense of our politicians.

This is not the case in Mpumalanga where environmental officials dislike trout to the point that they are prepared to destroy the hugely valuable trout aquaculture and tourism industry that exists in that province. This prejudice on the part of officials has seen a concerted effort by these officials to try and close down the trout producers which supply the Mpumalanga trout value chain

and indeed most of the former Transvaal with fish. The result has been inter alia the closure of the largest supplier of live trout in the province.



Ilan Lax on Route to meeting with the MTF

This persecution of trout producers in Mpumalanga means that many trout tourism venues such as the iconic Millstream resort that Steve Brookes writes about may not be able to source live trout. But it gets worse. The MTPA is now endorsing trout stocking permits with the condition “Dams Only” thus putting at risk the stocked river fishing resource that underpin much of Mpumalanga’s trout tourism. Furthermore they deliberately misinterpret the protected trout waters in Mpumalanga as being the limit of the trout waters in the province. All this has put billions of rands of investment and the jobs and livelihoods this investment support in jeopardy.

There is naturally a great deal of concern in Mpumalanga about this; hence the meeting we had with provincial officials. That meeting confirmed what we have seen elsewhere, namely while there is general, sometimes even enthusiastic, support in government for trout, some environmental officials are determined to play the role of the dog in the manger, sometimes going so far as to ignore and even undermine the dictates of their employers. They claim that they are driven by science but in truth their actions speak more of the kind of evangelical fervour one finds in fundamentalist religion. It is as if they believe they are doing “God’s work” and they do not care how much suffering they cause in the pursuit of their beliefs.

Happily DARDLEA does not seem to share the fundamentalism of some MTPA officials and like the trout value chain is looking for win-win solutions that benefit the people of their province. Our suggestion that a politically led task team be set up comprising of representatives from government was warmly received. A meeting is planned for late in August to make this happen.

Trout SA and FOSAF were happy to be able to report on this progress at was an extraordinarily well attended and very worried meeting of the Mpumalanga Trout Forum that took place at Walkersons on 24 July 2015. Peter Arderne’s report of that meeting can be accessed by clicking [here](#). The presentation I gave to that meeting can be downloaded [here](#). For more background information on the mapping and the efforts Trout SA and FOSAF are making to protect the trout value chain, go to the excellent article on the interview that Farmers Weekly had with Ilan Lax by clicking [here](#).