

# Presidents address Custodians Gala Dinner 2018

Our AGM and gala dinner surpassed our wildest expectations both in the numbers attending as well as the funds raised at the gala dinner.

All our international guests wholeheartedly endorsed the direction we have chosen which again reaffirms us as an association.

## Highlights and achievements in our first year

The support we received from sponsors and donors was immediate and considerable. Dallas Safari Club and the Wildsheep Foundation gave us \$10 000 and \$5000 respectively to get the ball rolling.

The 26 people attending the first meeting in December also pledged a total of R240 000 out of their own pockets to establish the association.

African Outfitter provided us with free office space and thus we were able to finance the start of our new association.

We participated in Conservation-Lab at Spier in Stellenbisch where we debated with known and vocal anti hunters Colin Bell and Ian Michler in front of an audience of globally respected conservation organizations, anti hunters and tour operators. From a hostile start, we turned many in the audience to believe that there is a place for trophy hunting. Through this event many channels have been opened up to us and we will continue to break new ground and form new relationships to help create a better understanding of the positive role trophy hunting can play in Africa.

I was invited to do a presentation on ethics in hunting to the African Lion Working Group in Skukuza and was warmly received. This is a group of researchers and scientists who make significant input on policy formulation at numerous levels. Again this is new ground for us and new channels are opened for our inputs and comments.

Custodians were invited to present at the parliamentary colloquium on the captive bred lion industry. We shared our presentation with S.A.Hunters who have the same views on the matter. We have established a very close relationship with SA Hunters who have helped us get sect 16A for members through them until we get our own accreditation with SAPS.

A big step forward has been the submission of our application with SAPS as a professional hunting body for accreditation for sect 16A of the Firearms Control Act. The pile of documents was handed over at Douglasdale SAPS on the morning of our AGM. On the morning of our AGM, we finally had all the documentation ready for our application with SAPS which was put together by Johan Martin of "Legally Armed" and at 8am we handed over the application to SAPS for accreditation. We hope to have accreditation early in the new year.

During the year we applied to join the Inter Provincial Professional Hunting Committee as

well as the Wildlife Forum. I am happy to say that we were accepted by all the provinces which makes our membership certificate valid when applying for PH and HO permits in the provinces. Our acceptance to the Wildlife Forum is eminent.

We have had constructive meetings with WRSA and will continue to engage with them with the intention to build SA as the hunting destination of choice for all international hunters. Although we have differences, we are able to sit around the table and constructively discuss issues that may be problematic to either party. We are happy that WRSA is also working to improve the image of SA as a hunting destination.

We are now also the official voice of the professional hunting industry in South Africa amongst OPHAA (Operators and Professional Hunters Associations of Africa). This association is the collective of all recognized PH and hunting associations of southern and east Africa. We are working well together, sharing information and striving for the same ideals of an ethical and sustainable industry. We have also signed a cross border agreement with all OPHAA members in an effort to eliminate illegal or unethical hunting committed by foreign hunting outfitters and PH's. We shall share any such information to the respective country can take the necessary action

We have appointed our disciplinary tribunal of 3 experienced attorneys each with a minimum of 10 years in litigation, including senior counsel. This is in accordance to our constitution and the idea is that disputes are handled efficiently and quickly. It is important for us to be able maintain our image and protect both our members and the integrity of the industry.

We have now also finally got our own offices in Johannesburg, opposite Broadacres in a secure office block. We are still currently moving in to our rooms and already have the use of printers, scanners, kitchen and boardroom which we share with the tenants in the other office space, saving us the purchasing costs. We will be sharing this space with African Professional Hunters Association (APHA) who will also contribute to the rental pay

We are also now looking to work closely with the SAWC (SA Wildlife College) again for both training and fundraising. Amongst other things, we hope to reinstate the gala dinners we did so successfully in years back with PHASA. Our association with the SAWC can open doors for both organizations and this fits in with our strategy, to position our association in the right place in the conservation and wildlife arena.

As president of Custodians I also attended the African Wildlife Consultative Forum in Uganda, a 4 day workshop hosted by the SCI Foundation. This forum brings together both government representatives and professional hunting associations from all over Africa to discuss threats, opportunities and to share information pertaining to the conservation of wildlife and hunting areas. This year was particularly useful as we had a delegation from the US Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS) visiting for the first time. It was an eye opener for them to hear first hand from African governments and professional hunters on the ground as to what is really happening in Africa and how the implementation of certain US policies I having the opposite effect of what is intended. This

was backed up by information from researchers and scientists. It also opened up direct communication between us and the USFWS. The full report on the AWCF can be seen on our website.

After our AGM I travelled to Namibia for NAPHA`s AGM and gala dinner. He we reaffirmed our commitment to work with each other on many fronts and both Custodians and NAPHA are being well supported by DSC.

It is exciting to be leading this new association of ours. Our members are committed and our numbers are swelling daily. The challenges we face as an industry are immense. The international pressure is mounting to stop all trophy hunting in Africa, driven by the animal rights groups who continue to mislead the ignorant public into believing that stopping hunting will benefit wildlife. Nothing is further than the truth. Wherever hunting has stopped, the loss of wildlife and habitats has accelerated. Politicians, airlines, entertainers etc make decisions that are expedient to their businesses and not to benefit wildlife. We have to educate society. Each and every one of us must get involved and talk to non hunters and anti hunters alike. Should we not succeed in changing the current western narrative, the consequences for wildlife will be disastrous and we shall have little to pass on to the next generation. Custodians is positioning itself to fight for hunting and wildlife and to align ourselves with respected allies in this fight. I call on all our members and friends to support your association in its aims and objects as without your support we will go nowhere at all.

Firstly it has been most gratifying receiving the support from DSC as it has emboldened us. In addition to DSC, we are the SA representative voice in OPHAA (Operators and Professional Hunting Associations of Africa). SCI has also given us valuable support.

We are now