

[South Africa: South African Association of Geomorphologists \(SAAG\) Conference and field trip. 12-18 September 2019. Proposed COMLAND session. Eastern Cape region of South Africa. Hosted by the University of Fort Hare. First and Second Circulars.](#)

REPORT

SAAG2019 Biennial Conference (Chintsa East, East London)

The conference began with a field trip to the Tsitsa River catchment led by Drs Jay le Roux (University of the Free State) and Bennie van der Waal (Rhodes University). Over three days the 28 delegates visited sites that demonstrated the challenge of rehabilitating a catchment that is plagued by dispersive soils that are highly prone to gully erosion while enjoying the dramatic landscape of the Eastern Escarpment. An international flavour was contributed by two delegates from Eswatini (Swaziland), two from Spain and four from Germany. Talks in the field by researchers working in the Tsitsa River catchment provided valuable background information into how researchers and implementers are working together to promote best practice rehabilitation activities in the catchment. Professor Heinz Beckedahl, who began his South African academic career at the University of the Transkei (now Walter Sisulu University), offered valuable insights into gully erosion processes.

Forty one delegates attended the main conference held at Arendsnes in Chintsa, Eastern Cape. Professor Ian Meiklejohn presented the keynote address, reminding delegates of the importance of Antarctic research. Although the conference and field trip had a strong soil erosion theme, the 10 posters and 25 oral papers were presented on a range of topics in geomorphology, of which 14 were student presentations. Two special sessions incorporated firstly COMLAND and, secondly, cosmogenic nuclides in geomorphology. Sponsorships from COMLAND and ESRI South Africa were used to support student attendance.

The conference was followed by a workshop on Erosion, Land Degradation and Rehabilitation, convened by Professor Beckedahl, Eswati University. Examples of rehabilitation practice from southern Spain, the Eastern Cape of South Africa and South African mine dumps demonstrated some of the common problems faced by rehabilitation practitioners. An important lesson is the need to adapt the rehabilitation measures to the needs of the land users, whether on private or communal land. Green solutions were promoted by a number of speakers. The workshop provided a useful space for interaction by the twenty five delegates who attended.

It is unfortunate that the SAAG conference and field excursion did not attract COMLAND members from outside South Africa. There were probably too many alternative conferences happening at a similar time – the IGU meeting in Slovenia and the IAG regional meeting in Athens. The link to COMLAND, however, gave the opportunity to advertise the commission and encourage SAAG members to engage with the COMLAND through the website and take advantage especially of their field trips. The sponsorship from COMLAND, that was used to support student attendance, was acknowledged as a valuable contribution.