

Introduction to the members of the proposed interim BOTSOC Council

Brian Christie has a Masters degree in Law from Cambridge University. He practised as an advocate in Zimbabwe before immigrating to South Africa where he has been for the last 30 years. He has also served on the boards of JSE listed companies.

Brian has been a member of BotSoc for the past eight years. For most of that time he has been a passive participant and simply enjoyed the magic of Kirstenbosch Garden. His concern was aroused when he read the minutes of the 2017 Kirstenbosch Branch AGM which revealed deep dissatisfaction among ordinary members of BotSoc.

Mr Bongani Mnisi initially joined BotSoc in 2013 and was an active and supportive member of the Kirstenbosch Branch Committee under the chairmanship of Dirk Muller until 2017. When he learnt of the proposed new Constitution, he chose to be part of the change process.

Bongani holds an MSc in Botany from Stellenbosch University and an Honours Degree in Sustainable Development. He is a qualified executive coach and believes in a participative approach towards conservation management. He is a Head of Nature Conservation at the City of Cape Town, where he is in charge of Biodiversity Management and manages the largest part of the Network including three Nature Reserves – Blaauwberg, Table Bay, and the Witzands Aquifer. Bongani is also a Non-Executive Director and Chairman of the Breede-Gouritz Catchment Management Agency, and a committee member of Fynbos Forum.

Dave Henry is a chartered accountant by qualification and owns a business in handling and logistics systems. He has been a member of BotSoc for more than 20 years and still serves as treasurer at the KZN Coastal Branch.

As part of Dave's many commitments to conservation he has been a custodian of the Havaan Forest for 35 years. This forest is situated in Umhlanga and is a large remnant of a climax dry coastal dune forest and the last of its kind. This forest grows on a dune that dates back 18,000 years. He has served on numerous boards and remains an active member on many.

Dr Bruce McKenzie studied at the University of Cape Town from where he obtained his PhD in 1984. He has lectured at the University of Transkei, University of the Western Cape and the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. He has lectured in Conservation Ecology and has supervised 10 Masters Degrees and published over 40 research papers and reports.

Bruce had a 10-year interrupted period away from academia when he was the Executive Director of the Botanical Society of South Africa (BotSoc) between 1997 and 2008. During this time, he managed various administrative and conservation programmes and projects. These included close co-operation with Conservation Agencies such as CapeNature, where he now is a member of the Board.

Dr Sershen Naidoo is a senior lecturer in Plant Ecophysiology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. He has a BSc in Biology, a BSc Honours in Plant Physiology, an MSc in Seed Biology, a PhD in Cryobiology and Plant Physiology, and a Post-Graduate Diploma in Higher Education.

Sershen's involvement in numerous community-based urban agriculture projects and ongoing commitment to the NGO-sector across Africa has seen him earn numerous accolades, including a Clinton Democracy Fellowship. Among his other achievements are: Founder and Chair of KZN Forest Conservation Network (2014-present), Trustee of Durban Botanic Gardens (2016-2021), Board member of BotSoc-Coastal Branch (2017-present), Chairman of the KZN-Forest Conservation Network (2015-present). He serves on the Editorial Board of the South African Journal of Science (2017-2019).

Prof Eugene Moll is an honorary life member of BotSoc. He has been an active BotSoc member for more than 50 years and in his retirement, teaches a course in plant ecology at the University of the Western Cape. He has served as a member of the BotSoc Council for five years, during which time he actively participated in drawing up and submitting to an AGM a transformation plan to create a BotSoc fully inclusive of all South Africans (circa 2007/8). Eugene is committed to resuscitating, updating and implementing this transformation plan within BotSoc.

Eugene was on the Natal Branch Committee from 1971 to 1973; Council from 1975 to 1978 and from 1986 to 1992; Editorial Committee of Veld and Flora 1976 to 1978; Flora Conservation Committee 1974 to 1979, and 1986 to 1989 as Chairman; Member of Council 2002 and Chair 2002-2007; member Veld & Flora Editorial Advisory Committee 2002-2014; Kirstenbosch Branch Committee 2011-2013 and 2016. Apart from numerous academic papers he has also written at least 43 articles for Veld & Flora over the years.

Ms Marinda Nel embraces the philosophy that clients come first. She enjoyed a career in business development – negotiating for assets both locally and internationally to be managed by Old Mutual Investment Group. Previously, Marinda was responsible for marketing and marketing research and, in the 80s, instrumental in Old Mutual committing to sponsor the Old Mutual National Choir Festival. A BotSoc member for more than 18 years, she became a volunteer early in 2016 and was subsequently elected to the Kirstenbosch Plant Fair Committee.

Marinda is smitten by flora and in particular the beauty, diversity and intricate relationships between the plant families, which has motivated her to learn more about botany. Her goal is to promote an appreciation of, a caring attitude towards and enjoyment of our plant kingdom.