

Caring for Mother Earth

By Lebohang Letaoana
Photo: Sgt Lebogang Tlhaole

As one enters the reception area at Air Force Base Makhado, one is welcomed by the emblem of AFB Makhado Environmental Services with these words: "We strive to conduct our operations in harmony with the environment, always remembering to preserve the environmental inheritance for future generations". I guess that is why the 2005 SANDF Environmental Awards ceremony was held on this beautiful base.

It was 23 years ago, when the DOD Annual Environmental Awards were initiated to inspire units and members of the SANDF to honour their responsibility towards nature and to care for the environment under their control, as well as to give recognition to these units and individuals for their contributions towards environmental services in the military.

During his welcoming speech, Brig Gen Des Baker (now Major General), the then General Officer Commanding AFB Makhado (now Chief Director Force Preparation), said: "It is evident then that environmental management in its many different forms is an essential component to the operational readiness of AFB Makhado. It is important to continuously identify, rate and manage environmental aspects and impacts on this base to achieve our own environmental policy goals, thereby preventing any unnecessary expenses, while ensuring the sustainable utilisation of this base into the future." He was referring to the incident that happened in 2000, when a fuel spill was discovered on the Roodewal Bomb range, "where we practise air-to-ground weaponry which poses a whole new set of challenges as we have to manage weapons, effects of possible

pollution and then of course the impact on the neighbouring farms," said Brig Gen Des Baker. "Increased governmental and public expectations regarding the management of the military together with profound changes in national environmental legislation during the last decade have significantly impacted, and continue to impact on the environment and our department. The DOD has, therefore, adopted and is in the process of developing an Environmental Management System for Defence, which is based on the principle of the ISO 14000 International Standard for Environmental Management," said Mr Jack Gründling, the Chief Financial Officer, who was the main functionary. Air Force Base Overberg has, for some time already, fully implemented ISO 14000 and is the only military base that is ISO 14000 certified.

The awards were divided into eight categories. Col Seakle Godschalk, SSO Environmental Services, said he was proud to see this event growing each and every year. "Since this is my last year as the Chairman of the Awards, it gives me great pleasure to see how far we have come, and I hope my successor will continue with the hard work and dedication that I did since the inception of the Awards."



Mr Jack Gründling, Chief Financial Officer, congratulates Brig Gen Job Magasela from ASB Lohatla for his team winning the Conservamus Floating Trophy for Environmental Services in the DOD.

Results

Rand Water Award for Water Efficiency in the DOD: *The winner:* ASB Lohatla and AFB Langebaanweg.

National Energy Efficiency Campaign Award for Energy Efficiency in the DOD: *The winner:* AFB Bloemspuit.

Keep eThekweni Beautiful Award for Integrated Waste Management in the DOD: *The winner:* ASB Potchefstroom.

Endangered Wildlife Trust Floating Trophy for Ecological Management in the DOD: *The winner:* Roodewal Bombing Range.

Caltex Floating Trophy for Base Environmental Management in the DOD: *The winner:* AFB Makhado.

Professor Kristo Pienaar Floating Trophy for Environmental Education and Awareness: *The winner:* ASB Lohatla.

SA National Parks Floating Trophy for Military Integrated Environmental Management in the DOD: *The winner:* AFB Overberg.

Conservamus Floating Trophy for Environmental Services in the DOD: *The winner:* Lohatla Training Area Environmental Team. 