

In preparing for this year's AGM, membership (through the Regional Representatives group) took a more active role in the process of nominating people to stand for election to the WESSA board.

In so doing we have tried to introduce a degree of representivity into the process. However, developments within the incumbent board and time constraints imposed by the decision to hold the AGM online necessitated the membership-driven nominations process holding to the MOI, but left little time for implementation of the Nominations Committee process recently introduced by the board as an add-on to the MOI process.

At the AGM held on 3 October 2020, it was decided by way of a vote of members, that the matter of the election of directors be adjourned to a later date to allow the board to undertake the Nominations Committee process.

Of the nominees originally put forward, three of the nominees withdrew their names from the nomination process, citing the potentially intrusive nature of the process as the reasons for withdrawal.

The nominees remaining are:

Eric Apelgren  
Helena Atkinson  
Dr. Hector Magome  
Mduduzi (Mdu) Majozi  
Dr. Lorien Pichegru  
John Wesson

By way of introduction to members, we provide summary background information on each of the nominees.

**WESSA Regional Representatives**

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**Eric Apelgren**

*Submitted by Sarah Alcock  
supported by the KZN Region*

Eric currently serves as the Head of Department, International and Governance Relations – eThekweni Municipality, city of Durban. He has 25 years of experience in International Development and education and has significant experience serving on NGOs.

He is a high-profile leader in KZN and South Africa, particularly within the municipal sphere and brings significant experience in governance and stakeholder engagement. Coupled with this, he has a personal passion for the environment and caring for the Earth.

Eric would be a valuable and influential member of the WESSA board and has a proven track record of providing a positive influence to transformation and development in South Africa.

His current responsibilities include Durban's sister city relationships, municipal international relations policy formulation, international donor relations, liaison with UN agencies and other multi-lateral organisations that are accredited in South Africa. The role includes protocol and event management support to all key city events that involves national, provincial, and international partners and participants. This includes protocol and logistics support to other key civic and intergovernmental relation events. Also involved in working on bids to bring international conventions and conferences, big sports, and cultural events to Durban. Works with the office of the Mayor and the City Manager on all international relations, events, and protocol. Provides strategic advice and support to all political office bearers and senior management on all matters relating to international relations and cooperation, intergovernmental relations, events, and protocol. Managing all PR and media relations on the municipality's international and intergovernmental relations programmes.

Current role also includes working on all projects and programmes that require alignment with all other spheres of government in South Africa. This includes all government departments, ministries, and state-owned entities. Current work experience includes working with national and international local government structures such as SALGA, South African Cities Network and the Global United Cities and Local Government Network.

His summarised career history includes Senior Manager – New Tourism Product Development, KwaZulu Natal Tourism Authority; Regional Director, KwaZulu Natal, Idasa ; Regional Coordinator, KwaZulu Natal - Institute for Multi-Party Democracy (MPD), ; Development Officer, KwaZulu Natal - Catholic Archdiocese of Durban, (responsible for identification, support and appraisal of urban and rural development projects benefiting poor communities in and around Durban. Also supporting community-based structures to facilitate development in areas experiencing high levels of violence, poverty, and natural disasters. Working with OXFAM UK, Christian AID, German International donors, and USA donors). Secondary school teacher, Department of Education and Culture, teaching Geography and school counseling.



**Helena Atkinson**

*Submitted by members of WESSA Western Cape*

Helena is a passionate and committed WESSA member and supporter, having served as a WESSA staff member, member of the WC regional committee and, briefly, as a Regional Representative. She has experience at national and regional levels and in business; she also has experience in broad elements of environmental and wildlife conservation and education and, as the Director of the Pangolin Trust and a cross-border safari business, is experienced in small business concepts and fundraising. She is a committed WESSA member and a hard and efficient worker who tackles tasks with enthusiasm, attending to the detail. An affable and sociable person she networks broadly and interacts with people warmly and professionally.

Helena worked as the Social Ecologist for Wilderness Safaris, Africa's largest ecotourism operator, for over 4 years where she was responsible for management of the successful Children in the Wilderness programme as well as extensive community engagement and development initiatives.

Helena was a General Manager and Executive Committee member of WESSA; her responsibilities included the management of biodiversity, water, community, and education programmes and projects for the organisation throughout the SADC region.

As a student, her master's thesis (cum laude) was a pivotal piece of work that successfully captured community opinions and reactions to the Tsitsikamma "no-take" fishing policy and has been an important South African study in the growth of the concept of "socio-ecological systems" and their role in protected area management and development.

Helena is people savvy and a leader. This, together with all of the above are required to actively contribute to an effective Board team, which places WESSA and its members to the fore.



**Dr. Hector Magome**

*Submitted by members of the WESSA Lowveld Region*

Hector became South Africa's first black ecologist when he joined Bophutatswana Parks in 1986. He obtained his doctorate in 2004 from the University of Kent in the UK. He served as the Managing Executive, Conservation Services, SANParks for over 20 years.

He is currently the deputy chairman of Resource Africa, a non-profit company registered in South Africa, which is affiliated with Resource Africa United Kingdom, a registered UK charity. Resource Africa works with a range of global and African partners to encourage and deliver new models of natural resource management, based on community participation in which the values of transparency, equity and respect for local people, their needs and customs, are uppermost in its purpose. Dr Magome joined the Board of RA in 1996.

Dr Magome is a member of the boards of the North West Parks Board and the Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency.

He is a trustee of the Pilanesberg Wildlife Trust which was established in 1999 to further conservation and social upliftment in and around the Pilanesberg National Park, situated 50km north of Rustenburg in the North West Province and managed by the North West Parks and Tourism Board. The Pilanesberg has spurred economic development in the region and provided social upliftment in this once largely disadvantaged rural community.

As for business interests, Dr. Magome is the chairman of Ubersolar (African Sun Solar Geysers), a Johannesburg-based company that manufactures and sells solar water heaters and which works with partner companies to supply photovoltaic electricity supply systems for homes and businesses.



**Mduzi (Mdu) Majozi**

*Submitted by the KZN Region of WESSA and Sani Wild Life Branch (Russell Suchet – chair)*

Mdu is a passionate environmentalist having attended the WESSA Environmental Educators course as well as biodiversity training at uMngeni Valley. He is currently a WESSA member, a branch vice chair and implements local environmental projects in his school as well as the broader community.

Mduzi Majozi has a long-standing career as an educator and is currently Vice Principal. He is enrolled for a B.Ed Honours at the University of the Free State. In 2020 he obtained an Advanced Teaching Certificate in online learning, adding to his other qualifications as an educator.

In his role as Vice Principal, Mduzi Majozi has honed his skills in leadership, management, facilitation and administrative skills through managing a school, its learners, governing bodies, interested parties and mandated authorities in the education departments. He has contributed towards ensuring that School Improvement processes are correctly implemented such as Whole School Improvement, Multi-Grade teaching, the National Nutrition Programme, Leadership and Instructional Leadership, Physical Resources, School Safety, Implementation of new Curriculum and Assessment, Quality Management Systems and Circuit Dashboard Training.

Further skill sets that would add to a board portfolio are Finance Management conducted by DBE, Basic Financial Systems for schools in respect of Accounting records, Banking, Budgeting, petty cash and stock control, Registers and Annual Financial Statements, Auditing.

Additional relevant skills include School Governance and Management which emphasizes Management, Law and Procedure, Education Policies and School Development Plans which deal with items on the Administrative Justice Act, Legislation that underpins policy on Organization Governance and its implications in School Governing Bodies; induction of newly appointed teachers and elected Governing Body members for effective and efficient school management and governance.

His community involvement includes Chairperson of Siyanqoba Youth Club that help feeding vulnerable learners and conduct homework clubs, Chairperson of Faithway Christian College and Chairperson of Underberg Safety and Security Council.



**Dr. Lorien Pichegru**

*Submitted by members of the WESSA Eastern Cape Region*

Lorien is currently Adjunct Professor at the Nelson Mandela University, a Senior researcher at the Non-Governmental Organisation the Sustainable Seas Trust, a Commercial skipper 9 meters with passenger endorsement (Nauti Advanced Scuba Diver certification and nitrox certification since 2016) as well as the Honorary Consul for France in Port Elizabeth.

**MEMBERSHIPS AND ENGAGEMENTS**

Lorien is a member and committee member of the Wildlife and Environment Society in South Africa, Port Elizabeth branch since 2015. In addition, she holds several memberships such as Nelson Mandela University Sustainability Forum, Coastal and Marine Research Institute Committee, IUCN commission, Society for Conservation Biology (SCB,) World Seabird Union (WSU), African Seabird Group. Local memberships entail Member of the Nelson Mandela Bay Maritime Cluster, Algoa Bay Hope Spot Committee Chairperson at the Sustainable Seas Trust (SST), Coega Environmental Committee, African Penguin Population Reinforcement and Habitat Working Groups and finally the Bunkering Environmental Working Group.

**EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS (Shortened)**

Lorien holds two PhD's, the latest being "Behavioural adaptations of seabirds to their environment", supervised by Dr David Grémillet, at the Department of Ecology, Physiology and Ethology (DEPE), of the Hubert Curien Pluridisciplinary Institute (IPHC), Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, in Strasbourg, and co-supervised by Assoc. Prof. Peter Ryan at the Percy FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology, University of Cape Town (2004-2008). Her PhD links with the Percy FitzPatrick Institute led to post-doctoral research 'using biotelemetry to assess seabirds' behavioural flexibility facing environmental changes and fishing pressure, and identify potential Marine Protected Areas for seabirds in the Benguela' (2008-2009); to determine the potential benefit for Endangered African penguins of purse-seine fishing exclusions around major colonies (2010-2012). She then became a research consultant to the Seabird Division of BirdLife South Africa; Research Associate at the Percy FitzPatrick Institute, University of Cape Town, and at the Zoology Department at the Nelson Mandela University; contractual lecturer at Rhodes University (2013-2014). This culminated to consulting for the Sustainable Seas Trust and becoming the Algoa Bay Hope Spot Chairperson, responsible for the successful launch of Algoa Bay as an international Hope Spot, by Dr Sylvia Earle in December 2014.

**PUBLICATIONS**

>55 peer-reviewed scientific papers, >30 popular articles. Co-editor of one book and published 5 book chapters. >50 governmental reports (scientific and technical). Associate Editor at Ibis since 2010, Reviewed >50 papers for >20 scientific journals, and several international grants.

**CONFERENCES**

Attended/presented >40 international and national conferences. In the organising committee of the

SERL conference (Strasbourg, France) in 2006, and the scientific committee of another the SAMSS (Durban, RSA) in 2021

**STUDENTS**

Supervised >50 post-grad students, incl. 1 post-doctoral fellow, 4 PhD, 20 MSc, 24 Honours

**FUNDINGS AND DISTINCTIONS**

Fundraised for R1 million private research vessel, received >R5 millions in diverse grants, awarded best Emerging Marine Scientist in South Africa by SANCOR in 2014, and won an award for conservationist efforts in the Eastern Cape by WESSA.

**LECTURES**

Lectured at under-grad and post-grad levels on Population Dynamics, Climate Change, Fisheries Impacts on Top Predators, Seabird Ecology, Impact of Non-Extractive Activities on Marine Ecosystems



**John Wesson**

*Submitted and supported by members of the Northern Areas Region*

**Introduction — John Wesson**

Former head of parks recreation and conservation in a local authority in the Free State for close to 20 years. Qualified Horticulturist, Landscape designer and Parks and recreation manager by profession. For many years Fellow of the Institute of Parks and Recreation Administration (FIPRA)

Nature Photographer, Artist, Writer, trails\adventures leader, lecturer in all aspects of birding, gardening and photography and a birder with over 45 years of experience. Received Fellowship of Photographic Society of SA (FPSSA). Chairman of Sand River camera club for close to 15 years and a Director of the photographic society of South Africa

Honorary conservation officer for Free State conservation for around 20 years.

One-time SA TOURISM registered specialist guide for Wildlife, birds and photographic safaris. B grade security training was PSIRA registered. Professional member of the Game Rangers Association of Africa (GRAA).

Rotarian for 30 years and Rotary International Paul Harris PH+7 recipient. Leader of the environment portfolio action group for Rotary D9400.

Regional manager\Senior manager Wildlife Society of SA for close to 10 years. Current chairman of Northern Areas region of the Wildlife Society of South Africa (Est 1926), as well as chairman of Birdlife Harties (a branch of Birdlife SA), Magaliesberg Protection Association, National Association of Conservancies of SA and managing production\editorial\picture editor\writer for the African Wildlife & Environment magazine. Chairman of WESSA Goldfields late 70's early 80's, chairman and established a number of bird clubs and chairman of most for about 40 years. Registered citizen scientist number 10074 with close to 400 full protocol cards submitted and a SAFRING registered bird ringer.

**Commendation — Renier Balt, member, WESSA NAR** | *I have personally worked with John and under his leadership experienced the difference he has made to make a difference and follow through with projects with substantial and sustainable impact. I served under his leadership at:*

*Birdlife Harties, as vice chairperson – it was started by John and affiliated with Birdlife South Africa, not only to facilitate fellowship amongst birders, but primarily to make a difference in the Birdlife environment at the Hartbeespoort Dam, the Magaliesberg and in the area.*

*As a member of the executive of the Magaliesberg Protection Association: Under John's leadership I experienced his commitment to address the many issues that affected this pristine and unique area, spanning boundaries and involving the various stakeholders to address many challenges in the area*

*As member of the NAR committee of WESSA: His ability to muster the enthusiasm of those involved and make a difference in the programs of WESSA has been experienced by many beyond the committee members.*

*WESSA NAR committee members support this nomination, and I quote from one of those who seconded the nomination: "John's total dedication, honesty and hard work is without doubt".*