



Association of All Wheel Drive Clubs - Southern Africa

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THE AAWDC VIEW ON THE STRATEGY AND IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK TOWARDS CO-REGULATION OF THE NATIONAL OFF-ROAD SECTOR IN SOUTH AFRICA

BACKGROUND

There was a time in the past when the government had the view that the only way to get the 4x4 hooligans out of the system, was to punish everybody – hence the unilateral decision by government to implement the beach ban. Imminent to that was an inland ban to achieve the same effect.

The best thing that could ever happen to the Off-Road industry was to be given a fair chance to prove that we stand united, that we are equally concerned about the environment and that we are responsible enough to regulate ourselves, or for that matter the hooligans amongst us. The ultimate measure of success of this would be if we could take hands with the government and collectively work on a framework towards a co-regulated strategy to solve these issues at hand.

AND THAT IS EXACTLY WHAT WE GOT!! Since Oct 2005 NOW worked on such a strategy and on Monday 16 March 2009 the Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) signed the “Strategy and Implementation Framework towards Co-Regulation of the National Off-Road Sector in South Africa” and thereby gave his blessing to the industry to continue with the implementation thereof. At this stage it is worthwhile to note that the focus and title of the strategy has changed from Self-Regulation to Co-Regulation.

STRATEGY

The strategy, in a nutshell, states that access to an **eco sensitive** area is forbidden unless the vehicle travels on a **registered track** and the driver is **competently qualified** or led by a **registered four wheel drive guide**. The strategy applies to inland areas only. So let's have a look at each of these highlighted issues.

ECO-SENSITIVE AREAS

The strategy applies only to areas that will be identified and listed as eco sensitive and therefore excludes unlisted areas. The responsibility to identify the criteria and attributes that would classify an area as eco sensitive lies with DEAT. They would furthermore list and map national eco sensitive areas. This process is far down the line and the first proposals in this regard could be ready by the end of the third quarter this year. The criteria and attributes used to identify eco sensitive areas could furthermore be forwarded to the provinces which in turn could identify and list eco sensitive areas that are geographically specific.



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REGISTERED TRAILS

The current process of establishing a track that would trigger a listed activity requires that an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is done. It is a formal and lengthy process and could cost a track owner tens of thousands of rand before such a track is established.

In the Strategy it is suggested that norms and standards are developed by the industry in such a way that if a track owner complies with these norms and standards then the compliance could replace the formal EIA processes. These norms and standards will be submitted to DEAT for approval and if the most important elements of the EIA are covered, it could replace the formal, lengthy and expensive process of a formal EIA.

DRIVER COMPETENCY

In order to comply with the legislative requirement to be a competent driver, a formal qualification within a legally acceptable qualification framework or authority namely the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), will be required. The driver competency unit standard, which is the standard against which competency will be measured, is registered and it lies with the Transport SETA, THETA. Any person that has been trained and qualified as a generic assessor can now qualify as an Off-Road Driver Trainer at THETA against this driver competency unit standard. Such a trainer can now train and assess a driver's competency against the unit standard within a Service Provider structure and if the person passes he/she will be issued with a formal certificate of competency within the SAQA framework. That would be the formal qualification needed that would allow access to an eco sensitive area.

To obtain this formal qualification could be an expensive exercise for the average 4x4 driver and the AAWDC is very well aware of it. We are in the process of developing a strategy that could drastically reduce the cost of obtaining such a qualification for a 4x4 owner that is a member of a club that is affiliated to the AAWDC. The plan is to get the AAWDC, via some of its member clubs, registered as a Service Provider, to train and register moderators, assessors and trainers within the club structures against the unit standard. The NOW budget has an allocation to assist the AAWDC to cover some of these costs. At the end of the day the AAWDC and its affiliated clubs should be in a position to assist their members to obtain the Driver Competency Certificate (DCC) within club structures, trained by registered club trainers in such a way that it could be a substantial cost benefit to those members. More about that in the last paragraph.

FOUR WHEEL DRIVE GUIDES

The strategy suggests that access to an eco sensitive area could also be obtained if a vehicle is led by a registered Four Wheel Drive Guide (4WDG). That should overcome the access problem for overseas visitors and others that might not see or could not obtain the benefit of the DCC. The 4WDG will have to have a DCC and will also have to be trained and registered against a 4WDG unit standard. If there are any people that are interested in becoming a 4WDG, visit www.4wdga.com for more information.



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CHANGES IN LEGISLATION

The strategy has no intention of bringing about any new legislation whatsoever. At most there could be a change in wording of existing legislation to accommodate the conditions of access.

FUTURE

The only thing on the agenda right now is to implement the proposed strategy inland. During the signing ceremony in the offices of the Minister he made it very clear, that if the industry would make a success thereof, other sensitive areas, like beaches, could be incorporated in the Co-Regulation Framework in the future. Although it is always been a future dream to get the beaches incorporated, I would like to confirm that it is not on the agenda right now and it is not the focus right now either. Let's focus on inland first, make it a success story and then we could start to dream on!!

CALL FOR INVOLVEMENT

The DCC is that part of the Strategy that has the biggest impact on the AAWDC and its members. We need to get the Service Provider and training infrastructure in place ASAP. In order to do that we need to get a DCC focus group going within the AAWDC ASAP. I therefore call on all the club committees to discuss this at your next meeting and to identify a club member that you would like to nominate to serve on the DCC focus group. If the clubs could forward those names to the Association Administrator, Isla Blasa, at admin@aawdc.org.za, by the end of April we will then get the focus group going early in May.

Thanks for your patience and keep the wheels rolling!!

Regards

Jakob Jordaan
Chairman: AAWDC