Report to the IAG on the Young Geomorphologist Training Program held at the SAAG 2023 Biennial Conference

The SAAG 2023 Biennial Conference was held in and around Hogsback, in the Eastern Cape of South Africa, from 28-30 September 2023. The 28th of September was dedicated to the pre-conference excursion and 29 & 30 September for academic presentations.

With the generous support of the International Association of Geomorphologists (IAG), SAAG was able to sponsor some of our Emerging Career researchers (ECRs) and Southern African Young Geomorphologists (SAYG) to attend the conference and take part in our Young Geomorphologist training program. Successful applicants were Febe Jansen van Vuuren (University of the Free State), Lukho Goso (University of Pretoria), Renée Grundling (University of Pretoria), Jason le Roux (University of the Free State), Mthobisi Masilela (University of Eswatini), Thandeka Ndlela (University of Eswatini), Nkosingizwile Ndlovu (University of Pretoria), and Marike Stander (University of the Free State).

f.l.t.r.
Back: Jason le Roux, Nkosingizwile Ndlovu, Mthobisi Masilela, Lukho Goso, Febe Jansen van Vuuren, Thandeka Ndela
Front: Renee Grundling, Marike Stander

The training program consisted of two parts of which PART I focused on the pre-conference excursion. During the excursion, successful applicants learned about wetland degradation, rehabilitation, and wetland types of the Amathole Mountains. A significant portion of the training focused on peatlands, the identification thereof, and the sampling of cores from wetlands for subsequent laboratory analyses.

The training was led by Willem Lubbe and Jason le Roux from WaterMakers. The field guide to the excursion is available on the SAAG website. The guide includes important information on how sampling is done in the field, and how peat is identified. In the field, participants were shown how to identify peat using the Von Post scale once peat had been sampled using a Russian augur. This was followed by assembling a weir meter, and a piezometer, both of which were subsequently installed to show participants how each piece of equipment works in the field. This was followed by testing water collecting in the weirs for pH, electrical conductivity, and temperature.

PART II allowed successful applicants to see the behind-the-scenes part of organising a conference. This portion of the Training Program extended roughly over 6 weeks, with online meetings held every 2 weeks guiding the participants through the process. Before conference commencement awardees were involved in session descriptions, selection and ordering of abstracts, and scheduling of sessions. During the conference, awardees helped with logistical aspects, as well as chairing their sessions (together with an established researcher to assist if needed). PART II was run by Christel Hansen from the University of Pretoria. The Book of Abstracts and efforts of the ECRs can be viewed here.

SAAG would like to thank the IAG for their generous support without which many of our young researchers would not have been able to join the conference. The excursion and conference were a rewarding experience and an important opportunity to learn new things, share knowledge, and network.

Your 2023 Conference Organising Committee
Christel Hansen (University of Pretoria), Elizabeth Rudolph (University of the Free State), Renée Grundling (University of Pretoria) & Laura Bannatyne (Rhodes University)

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