



MATLABAS CUSTODIANS

PROTECT | DEFEND | IMPROVE

**NEWSLETTER 2024
YEAR 5**



**MATLABAS
PROTECTION CONNECTION**
THE SAFEST POINT OF VIEW



**MATLABAS
IMPROVEMENT MOVEMENT**
for our people...



**MATLABAS
CONSERVATION INITIATIVE**

Review of 2024:

In 2024, the Matlabas Custodians once again stamped their mark as reliable and active guardians of our nature and community. Several initiatives were launched, and completed projects not only strengthened our objectives but also fostered cooperation between the community and us. In the following sections, we will share the highlights of the year, as well as the challenges we overcame together.

Highlights of the Year:

1. Biodiversity Conservation:

We continued our efforts to conserve the unique biodiversity of the Matlabas area. In collaboration with local farmers and other stakeholders, we actively opposed several proposed mining applications that posed a potential threat to the environment. The establishment of solar farms in the area was also thoroughly investigated and put under the microscope. These projects required a significant amount of time, research, and study to fully understand the impacts they might have on the ecosystem. We would like to express our sincere thanks to the small group of individuals who dedicated their valuable time and expertise to protect and secure the future of our bushveld.

2. Educational and Community Projects:

Throughout the year, assistance was provided in various forms, from food parcels, adult diapers, hostel fees, and support for women and children exposed to domestic violence. We were also involved in HFM's Lunch- and Care package projects.

A total of 54 women from across the Matlabas area received first aid training, and by partially funding this initiative, the Matlabas Custodians ensured that this life-saving skill was transferred to the community.

This year's Packages with Passion Christmas project was a great success, made possible by the selfless contributions of our donors. Thanks to their incredible generosity, we were able to buy 143 gifts for children and 142 gifts for the elderly. This initiative involved an impressive R110,000 and was a clear reflection of the community's joy and solidarity during the festive season. The positive impact of this project will be remembered for a long time, and we are deeply grateful for every donation and expression of love and support.

3. Matlabas Control Centre:

The establishment of the Matlabas Control Centre is a long-awaited dream that has finally been realized, and it is a significant step in strengthening the community's ability to respond quickly and effectively to emergencies. The primary purpose of the centre is to facilitate communication between the community and the relevant authorities (or agencies), and to provide a centralized coordination point for managing urgent situations.

The ultimate vision for the control centre is to integrate all residents of the Matlabas area into the relevant WhatsApp emergency groups, which will be monitored 24 hours a day.

Through this technological approach, the necessary role-players in various emergencies can be quickly summoned, significantly reducing response times and improving the effective management of crises.

The successes achieved so far in the short period of the control centre's existence are remarkable. It is a clear testament to what can be achieved when a community acts as one and stands together in the common goal of ensuring the safety and well-being of all its members.

4. Establishment of Matlabas East and Lephalale Neighbourhood Watches:

The establishment of the Matlabas East and Lephalale neighbourhood watches was a significant milestone in expanding the Matlabas Farm Watch area, increasing coverage from 1.6 million hectares to 2 million hectares. Furthermore, our camera network showed substantial growth, with the number of cameras on the Limpopo server increasing from 343 to 472, and the number on the North West server rising from 136 to 151 cameras.

5. Collaboration with Afriforum:

After several extensive discussions and negotiations with Afriforum, a cooperation agreement was signed, which is regarded as an important milestone for the Matlabas Custodians. This agreement is not only a step in the right direction but also opens new opportunities for strengthening the community's safety and well-being. Afriforum's experience in community development, law enforcement, and promoting social cohesion will provide valuable resources to support our efforts in these areas.

The collaboration involves a strategic approach to improving community safety, sharing resources, and launching joint projects that will maximize long-term benefits for the Matlabas area. We believe that the synergy between the Matlabas Custodians and Afriforum will enhance the community's ability to address crises more quickly and effectively. This partnership not only offers practical benefits but also contributes to the promotion of a stronger, more united community capable of working together to tackle future challenges.

6. Monthly Report Successes:

Each month, a detailed success report was sent out, providing a summary of incidents that occurred during the month, as well as the associated successes. With gratitude, we can testify to a noticeable reduction in crime in certain areas, particularly where regular patrols are carried out by community members. These results confirm the value of active community involvement in maintaining safety. In areas where challenges still persist, we encourage the community to get involved and take an active role in addressing these issues. Through cooperation and joint effort, we can continue making our environment safer for everyone.

Challenges:

The drought currently affecting parts of the region is having a direct and severe impact on our farmers. When our farmers suffer, we feel their pain and challenges together. The financial pressure that follows due to the current economic conditions in the country is immense, yet we are grateful for the continued support we still receive from the community. In these times of trial, we look to the Heavens and wait with patience and hope for the much-needed rain—rain that is not only needed by the people but also by the plants and animals in our environment to survive and thrive. We are sincerely grateful for the beautiful rain that has already fallen in some areas.

Outlook for 2025:

As we look back on the successes and challenges of 2024, we are excited about the opportunities that 2025 holds. We will continue to protect the biodiversity of the Matlabas area and strengthen our collaboration with local farmers, community members, and other stakeholders. The expansion of the Matlabas Control Centre's capabilities, including the full integration of the community into emergency groups, will be a priority focus to further improve response times in emergencies. We also plan to expand our educational and community projects, with more initiatives aimed at health, safety, and sustainability.

We will continue to promote the fight against crime through regular patrols and the active involvement of the community, and will leverage our collaboration with Afriforum to improve the well-being of the community. Finally, while we continue to struggle with the impacts of the drought and economic challenges, we remain optimistic that the community's determination and cooperation will enable us to shape a sustainable and prosperous future.

Christmas Message:

As we close the year 2024 and look ahead to 2025, we would like to wish each member of the Matlabas Custodians community a blessed Christmas and a prosperous New Year. This festive season is a time for reflection, gratitude, and hope, and we want to express our appreciation for the continued support, hard work, and cooperation that each of you brought in 2024. We thank every member of the community for their valuable contributions—whether through manual work, time, ideas, donations, or simply their presence. The road ahead is full of promise, and we are excited to work together with you to bring the vision of a sustainable future to life. You are the heart of this organization, and together we will continue to make a positive impact in our community and on nature. The path ahead will not always be easy, but with the spirit of unity, solidarity, and perseverance, we will surely overcome the challenges of the future. May 2025 be a year of new beginnings, growth, and sustainable progress for all of us. Together, we can build a stronger, safer, and more united community—one that will benefit not only the present but also future generations.

With appreciation and excitement,
The Matlabas Custodians Team

