



Newsletter

Summer 2013

Chairman's Chat

by Cathy Shimmin

We look forward to 2013 with a full agenda of issues to tackle and want very much for all at Noetzie to be interested and involved.

The new Committee is as follows:

- Cathy Shimmin – Chairman
- Julie Gosling – Deputy Chairman and Municipal matters
- Laurel Robinson – Secretary
- Lauren Shimmin - Treasurer
- Wendy Dewberry – Conservation Matters
- Marina – bridge between conservancy and municipal matters
- Marylou Botha – Website
- Iona Everett – Newsletter

I am honoured to have been elected Chairman of the first all-female committee and will do my best to serve the whole Noetzie Community. Nick Taylor is a hard act to follow – thanks Nick for your hard work and leadership

In his address at the end of last year Nick Taylor spoke of the major areas of concern that had kept the NCOA committee busy and these and others will keep us busy again this year. These were:

Montrose B&B

Knysna municipality has finally served notice on Chesterfield Holdings who own Montrose, but they have however asked if the NCOA could accept occasional commercial use of the Castle, as well as use for “special occasions”.

The NCOA committee opposed this on a number of grounds, including unacceptable ablution facilities, leakage, previous objections that have not had any effect on the illegal usage, and increased traffic.



Nick stated that the original request was for no more than 8 trips by the Pezula bus per day, but that they were far exceeding this. Further, alcohol is being served on the beach, which is illegal. The objection was submitted on 11th December 2012.

Julie Gosling had submitted an excellent objection in her private capacity and was contacted by Keith Stewart who asked to meet with Julie to ask what the community would accept. This request was put to the attendees at

the AGM. The Committee this year is still very much involved and wants to collate any ideas put forward. We would like, therefore, to hear from anybody who may have an idea on actions that either the Committee or Pezula could take to improve this thorny situation.

Old Pezula Castle

Whilst this has been cleared of rubble and the danger of open tanks mitigated, it remains an issue in terms of its heritage status. The committee will continue to ensure that this, one of the oldest landmarks in Noetzie, is preserved.

The EMP

The original concept of a legal Environmental Management Plan (EMP) has in the past year been found to be impractical. There remains however a need for documentation that can be used by Noetzie residents as a reference. It was announced at the AGM that three documents would be produced:

- The original draft EMP has some use and if reworked, can form a description of current legislation. It is felt that this therefore should be kept in draft form as a reference document on the website as an orientation to development for new owners, new builds and builders.
- A slimmed down version with a summary of the draft EMP should be provided, with the inclusion of useful guidelines. An example would be the safe use of gas or a guide to fauna and flora as a Home-owner's guide to living at Noetzie, no longer than 20 pages. This will also be put onto the website and can be downloaded.
- The new Duty of Care document will form the focus of the efforts of the new committee. This will embody a different approach to different items. It will document the status quo which will be the basis of what the community can maintain and clarify those actions that can be taken without extensive bureaucracy such as a BASR, EIA or OSCAER Permit. SANParks and the Knysna Municipality will approve and sign it off. Once approved by the NCOA committee, it will be distributed to the members for further comment.

Quality of the water

The water quality remains of great concern and Wendy has put an extraordinary amount of effort into sampling the lagoon in different areas and rushing them to George for analysis. What is needed is a concerted effort to analyse these tests and make a great effort to ensure that wherever the root causes lie, we try to ensure that every effort is made to counter them.

To this end, Tim Everett has dosed all septic tanks in the river area twice before the season and once after the season to ensure maximum effectiveness. There is a move on the part of at least five of the river-side community to separate grey water and upgrade septic tank facilities.

This, whilst a good start, is not the entire solution, nor is there yet a commitment from the entire community. We therefore ask each one of you to look closely at your own waste disposal and ensure that it is not problematic. Bruce Botha has kindly offered his services in terms of analysis for free and can quote for mitigation of any defects. Possible causes from the municipal toilets and local communities will be addressed by the Committee.

We would like the Noetzie community to report any issues that they feel would be important for the Committee to address for 2013.

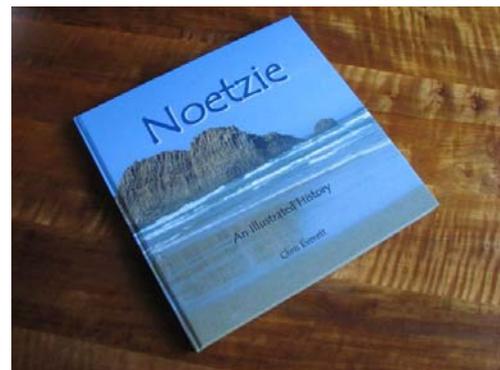
Noetzie History

Chris's book – **"Noetzie – An Illustrated History"** was launched in December and was very well received. Many people commented on the degree of detail and the



comment that it considerably exceeded their expectations was made by several. I can personally attest to the amount of work he put into it and I particularly

enjoyed his "scoop" of the previously unpublished archaeological digs and the details he found about the mystery Doctor and his shack up the river. Anita's lovely sketches dotted around the book were also greatly appreciated. Some minor errors were pointed out, but Chris takes the philosophical view that this is his Persian carpet, which always has at least one mistake, as in Islamic thought nothing man-made can be perfect.



The NCOA Committee decided to award the Conservancy Award for 2012 to Chris for the history and this was done at the AGM.

A total of 69 Noetzie people ordered copies and Chris took a chance and ordered a further 11 copies at his risk, (not insignificant when the cost per copy is so high). All the extra copies were snapped up fast and Knysna Library also has a copy thanks to the well known Knysna historian Margaret Parkes.

Several people who did not order copies would like one and Chris has investigated the cost of a further limited printing, which is R600. If you want one or know someone who might, you must react now (before end of February 2013) and send me an e-mail to iona.everett@iafrica.com. As soon as we have final numbers we will come back to you with detail of where payments can be made. If you are aware of any errors, please let me know as the possibility of an erratum sheet will be looked at.

The South - East Passage

by Jess Devine

I'm Jess Devine (and I'm 11 years old). My mom is Marina and my grandfather was Nimmo Reid. My mom, dad, James (my 9 year old brother) and I were staying at our house at Noetzie. One morning my mom said we were going on a walk. "Where to?" I asked. "I think somewhere up river." answered my mom. "You know it's raining right?" James said. "And is there any one that does know where we're going?" My mom said we were trying to find an old path. The others doing the walk were Nick, Caroline, Richard, Donald (our leader) and Chris (second in charge)!



When we got to the Lily Pond we crossed over to the other side and parked the canoes. We all took off our crocs and sandals to

put on our walking shoes. We walked up a stream that came into the Lily Pond until we came to a sort of path up a ridge (more like an animal path). We followed it up and along but as we walked on, the path seemed to become more and more of a bush pig path than anything. James and myself



were sent ahead to find the easiest way. Then the path seemed to disappear at one point. On the left there was a steep cliff sort of thing with sandy ground and we scrambled along it. I found that hard because I kept slipping and grabbing onto rotten roots or branches and then slipping more. We decided that this was not the way so James and I struggled up higher to find another way. Everyone else looked around too. By then we had scratches down our arms and legs. It had stopped raining now we were in fynbos. We looked and looked

until Chris called out “I think this is the best way.” We all went there and it was definitely easier than the cliff. We walked on. Donald and Chris kept looking at their maps and GPS to find out how far we had walked and what direction we had to go!



Then finally we came out of the fynbos and into the forest again! It was a lot easier. Then we came to a sheer cliff! It was so high and long. We had to walk all the way around it. Everyone was hungry so we sat on a fallen tree and ate. My mom, James and I had peanut-butter sandwiches. After a little rest we walked on. Finally we met up with the “Badger trail” (the path to the falls). It was really easy walking down the path compared to the fynbos. Chris gave James and I a turn to look at the GPS which was really cool because it seemed like we were walking straight but we weren’t! Soon after that we came to the beach and went home for a late lunch.

It was an honour to walk with Donald and Chris – thank you for the experience. We walked through beautiful forest that has perhaps never seen humans before!

Marina Devine

Environmental News

by Wendy Dewberry

Discovery Park



I have been fortunate to attend my second design charette¹ of the Discovery Park envisaged for Knysna. Marina Devine joined me for this which happened over three days at the end of January 2013

The envisaged Discovery Park on our doorstep (at Brackenhill Falls on the Noetzie River), will be a first in the world, putting both Knysna and South Africa on the map. Biomimicry attempts to follow the design principles of nature. The emphasis is not “green”, but to find solutions to problems – for example more streamlining in jets. That it looks to nature, where there is no destruction in construction, and development takes place with a symbiotic relation the surrounding environment, the solutions would more than likely be environmentally supportive.

¹ The word *charrette*, sometimes Anglicized to charette, refers to a collaborative session in which a group of designers drafts a solution to a design problem – Ed.

This project is the brainchild of Susan Swain, who was our guest speaker at the AGM. She has had an interest in Biomimicry since 2004 and attended the Biomimicry in Design Workshop with Janine Benyus in September 2009. Motivated by the belief that biomimicry is something that can be applied in all areas of our lives, Sue has been working on a model for the Garden Route Town of Knysna based on the principles, strategies and processes of a natural system. These principles have been distilled into a model to help Knysna “function like a forest”. The model can be used to guide how we run our businesses, live our lives, plan and run the town, and solve any number of problems from design challenges to tourism-related issues. Sue has received funding from the National Lotteries Board, from a funding proposal submitted in 2005, to coordinate the research and design and raise funds for the establishment for a Biomimicry Discovery Park. This will be a public education facility and eco-tourism attraction rolled into one very interactive, fun and engaging park, designed to immerse people in the fascinating world of nature and reveal how we can draw lessons from all we see around us.

Before we headed out to the site where we spent the afternoon, we were treated to a talk by Claire Janisch². Claire, a chemical engineer, is a sustainability and innovation advisor and biomimicry professional. She is a graduate of and a co-trainer for the international 2-year biomimicry Professional’s Program and currently heads up biomimicrySA. As a biomimicry professional she spends her time exploring nature’s technological miracles in diverse ecosystems and shares this new way of viewing and valuing nature through expeditions and workshops – teaching and training professionals, students and scholars. Claire has a MSc in the field of Environmental Process Engineering and has worked across Africa as a consultant in: Environmental Technology, Sustainable Energy and Climate Change, Cleaner Production, Sustainable Urban Design, Integrated Waste Management, Sustainable Agricultural Practices, Eco-labelling, Environmental Management & Environmental Education.

On site we were given a field talk by local Field Guide expert Mark Dixon, (<http://www.gardenroutetrail.co.za/>) who gave us some background to the site in terms of geology, weather patterns, flora and micro organisms. Did you know that only 30 percent of the organisms we call our body is made up of us? - the rest is made up of microbes, bacteria and other parasites we host - a glass or two of wine a day, I say! Also that the ratio of humans to insects is 1: hundreds of millions?

The architect who is very keen on this project and as far as I can make out, will be the designer, is Mick Pearce, (<http://www.architectsforpeace.org/mickprofile.php>) He is a designer of living buildings, the Eastgate Centre in Harare being the most famous. What a lovely man and being with him was awesome.

John Todd, who wrote a book called Living Machines will be the next guest to the project in October. He's a world expert on water.

² She is an interesting young woman (and incidentally my niece) - hear her speak at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z6WIHqhxJ0g> - Ed.

Here is some dinner table information to keep your guests interested:

- A Tardigrade is a tiny, water-dwelling, segmented animal with eight legs which can be boiled, frozen or dehydrated for 120 years. Undo it and it gets up and walks away.
- They have used the concept of myothelial sugar coating to successively transport vaccines, thereby reducing fridge costs and accidental loss of stock through breaks in the cold chain.
- They have made a polymer called SHRILK, which is a fabric with silk properties - stronger than anything man has made in the past.

Biomimicry is an attempt to solve problems by asking different questions. Look to the problem, ask the question, locate the verb and ask what nature does with that verb. We workshoped that in groups with Claire and it was very interesting. We usually think of recycling as "cradle to grave" or down-cycling, and yet nature recycles in the "cradle to cradle" or re cycling style.

Mick Pearce explains Architecture as the "third skin". Our skin is first, our clothes are second and our shelters are the third. Early architecture was based on fire, and now our "fire" comes from a plug in the wall. The invisible nature of our fire from the principle of energy is seen to be problematic in the way that much modernity is ... we are removed from the essence. For example, the humble plastic water bottle has nearly as much equity value, in terms of mined carbon, as you can hardly believe - ... DIAMONDS !!!

The idea for developers is to use the tree as the example. The tree is a complete living organism which re cycles. Further, it is decentralised - each leaf is self sufficient. The idea would be to have buildings which are modular and each mode being self sufficient in terms of energy, water and waste. This would take away the clumsiness of centralised processing.

Baboons

You may or may not be aware that baboons caused great unease at Noetzie over the past season. I was alerted to this in mid January and immediately contacted Cape Nature who met with me and Henk Booysen of the Pezula Private Estate.

The habituated pair which reportedly caused all the problems dispersed from a troop to the North West of us. There are plans in place for a permit to destroy this habituated and destructive pair which should solve the problem encountered in December. However, it is important that each one of us continue to take responsibility with our homes. We are aware and forewarned. In our meeting with Cape Nature they were informed that for many years Noetzie Community were conscious of living with wild animals. Our baboon proof bins at the river and in the car park and on the beach were mentioned, signs informing visitors, window guards on some homes and our general understanding of keeping food out of sight was conveyed. Renters are always an issue and if you have friends or renters in your houses, please make it a priority to explain about never feeding



baboons and keeping food out of sight. It only takes one incident for general harassment and mayhem to begin. Meanwhile, our wild troop is delightful and forage in the fynbos like baboons should. Because the opportunity is so great, I post some lovely portraits of our troop on our Noetzie Conservancy Facebook page.

Knysna Municipality

From Neil Meterlerkamp's report to the AGM

Neil Metelerkamp as our Ward 3 Representative, addressed the AGM and started by briefly presenting an outline of the Ward system. He explained that it was part of the legislative structure; there are 10 members with the Ward Councillor for each ward. They are elected for a 5 year period, concurrent with the political election period. He emphasised however that this was in no way a political structure. Ward committee members represent various members of the community and each sector has a member. All members fall under the Speaker.

The ward into which Noetzie falls is Ward 3. It is the largest and also the furthest east, covering Kruis valley and Dam se Bos and it runs to the Noetzie Road and the Uniondale Road. Neil explained that the idea was to act as conduit between the people and the Council. This helped the Councillor to be aware of the problems experienced by the people in the Ward. The problem in 2012 was that there were not enough meetings.

The ward committee formulates the IDP and this leads to the budget. The IDP is drawn from what people want. It represents people's interests; he gave examples of items such as the upgrade of the Noetzie Road, or a new cemetery, (which is proposed for the Safcol site to the right of the Noetzie road going towards Noetzie and which he considered to be preferable to a dump.)

If we need Neil to take up the issues with the Council we need to approach him, his door is open to the Noetzie community. This is not the only means however; anybody has the right to approach the Councillor directly.

Neil complimented Santie den Boestert, the committee's municipal representative, who has done an excellent job in communicating with the Council. A request was made from the floor that all communication with Council are copied to the NCOA committee and to Neil. Neil reiterated however that everyone can go directly to Lauren Waring, the Municipal Manager in Knysna. He noted that she is extremely competent and was part of the planning committee.

Rates and valuations

This is an ongoing issue but little can be done until the Valuations Court has sat and ratified the changes in property values. This needs to happen because the changes were greater than regulations allow without outside assessment. They were due to sit in November but that was postponed until February. We will keep you informed.



BIRDS AT NOETZIE, CHRISTMAS 2012

By Donald Fabian

The bird life at Noetzie, seen from a lagoon perspective, has been rather quiet this year. Of course the breeding season is nearly over, although some species are no doubt still busy, but even so many of the species that we normally hear and see at this time have not put in an appearance, as yet. I have not seen any terns on the beach, normally there are flocks of Swift Terns, with several Sandwich Terns among them, and small flocks of Arctic Terns. The Giant Kingfishers, usually so raucous, are here but not very obviously. There are some African Black Ducks, but they seem to be keeping themselves to themselves and the same applies to the Moorhen and the Coot.

To continue the litany, the Greater-striped Swallows that normally nest under the Everett's verandah are not doing so and the sky is empty of swifts and swallows early in the morning and all day. But an unusual sight was a large flock of about 300 Barn Swallows perched on the telephone wires along the road above Julie Gosling's house on 21st December, too early for them to be gathering for migration, I should have thought.



There is a small flock of three Black Saw-wings up the river, but no Rock Martins, Common House Martins or White-throated Swallows, nor White-rumped and Black Swifts, which are usually a common sight circling about the cliffs and above the lagoon.

So what have we seen and heard? An Osprey was perched high up on the river bank for a short while one day. A Narina Trogon has been heard hooting up the river. An unusual species here is the Cattle Egret. Two roosted on a tree by the lagoon on 27th December. That is not quite as unusual as the Openbill Stork that paid us a visit here three years ago, but we cannot expect a rarity like that every year. What is nice is that the Knysna Warbler is here again in strength. Fifteen years ago or more they were calling everywhere and I was continually being asked 'What is that little bird calling all the time?' After being relatively scarce for a few years, I am made aware of them a lot at the moment, the call is a series of chips increasing in speed, followed by a long trill. Also here is Victorin's Warbler, with a tinkling little call coming from dense shrubby under-growth around the toilets, Montrose and the parking area.

The cuckoos are not very evident, apart from the Red-chested Cuckoo. I have not heard Klaas's Cuckoo, although others have done so, and the Emerald Cuckoo, although probably still here, is silent at this time. Forest Canaries are missing and so are Bully, Yellow and Cape Canaries and the Streaky-headed Seedeater, but I expect they are seen in the fynbos above us. Even the Cape Bulbul is giving us a miss on the lagoon this year, as is the Paradise Flycatcher and the Blue-mantled Flycatcher.

The African Wood-Owl is very quiet and so is the Fiery-necked Nightjar. Ever since I have been recording birds at Noetzie, the Scaly-throated Honeyguide has been calling at the rapids, its monotonous rising trill every 55 seconds or thereabouts challenging you to find it and look at it, not at all easily done. I have not heard it this year, I hope someone else has.

Well, the year is not over yet and the birds may start to show themselves. So far I have recorded 50 species in December and I expect to add to that number, so it is not all doom and gloom! Happy birding to you all.

NOETZIE WEBSITE UPDATE:

By Marylou Newdigate

We try and keep you connected to Noetzie throughout the year by sharing nature sightings, reminders, interesting information- anything to do with Noetzie on our Noetzie Facebook page. Only members will see the posts, photos and comments. Please don't be shy.

The website www.noetzie.co.za is doing very well, it gets double the traffic since the site was re-designed using a DIY 'Wordpress' program.

We are able to check statistics, add photographs or edit website pages, as well as write blog posts ourselves. Please check the website regularly, read the latest blog-posts and remember to click on 'subscribe'. If you have any difficulty with the website, have suggestions or notice any mistakes, please let me know about it, as soon as possible. This is a 'team' effort. The documents- minutes and

draft of EMP can be found in the 'members only' section, which is password protected for paid up members, i.e. 'in good standing'. The most popular photo on the website seems to be the dead newborn dolphin. 'Noetzie' is the most popular search term, followed closely by 'Noetzie castles' - both bringing the most traffic to the site. (We get about 1000 views on average, per month). People from all over the world visit the website to look at the photographs and browse one or two blogposts. If you have any images you would like to see on the website, I would love to add them- as the Fauna, Flora, Landscapes Galleries could all do with some extra photographs.

Beach Parking

Nick Taylor addressed the issue of parking during the AGM. He explained that in the original proposal, six parking places at the bottom of Old Waggon Road were mooted but only four were built due to objections from two NCOA members. This had resulted in a shortage. The committee had discussed this and are assessing whether we needed to disturb the bush for two additional parking places. Julie and Neil have established an additional two bays on Erf 84, (this belongs to Chesterfield Groups Holding and is used by Pezula), making a total of six bays available. This is working well on a rotational basis. Neil keeps the keys and assists with requests, based on people in residence at the time. This is a temporary situation until beach access is regained. The additional two bays will only be temporary, as if Erf 84 is sold or Montrose applies for consent use they will need two bays.



Unusual lagoon feature

By Iona Everett

We had the unusual experience of canoeing almost to North's cottage this December.



Those not fortunate enough to visit Noetzie over the festive season, would have loved to see the vast area of lagoon that at times took up a third of the normal beach area. This, combined with some beautiful high tides, meant that the size of the beach was halved! Pezula had little or no space to place their umbrellas.



I have a wonderful memory of the lifeguard sitting on his chair surrounded by water and looking towards the houses in order to do his duty. Thanks to Human Naude for the picture!

As most will know, the lagoon has eroded access at the end of Old Waggon Road to the beach and at stages one could have jumped off the end of the concrete strips at the beach directly into the lagoon two meters below.



Later the river meandered through several curves and flowed into the sea. Enormous fun was had by young and old, either at high tide with water flowing into the lagoon or once the lagoon broke through to the sea and the water poured out, causing large waves for small boats and board surfers alike.



Neil Meterlerkamp commented that he had been coming to Noetzie for over 70 years and had never seen the lagoon like that.

The result was a pool of shallow water in front of Montrose Castle which became almost too hot to swim in. There was a nasty looking bloom of slimy algae. I didn't want to touch it, but some of the teenagers enjoyed playing with it!



Dolphins

By Iona Everett

Bottlenose dolphins, the genus *Tursiops*, are the most common and well-known members of the family Delphinidae, the family of oceanic dolphins. They inhabit warm and temperate seas worldwide. They are grey, varying from dark grey at the top near the dorsal fin to very light grey and almost white at the underside. This counter-shading makes them hard to see, both from above and below, when swimming. Adults range in length between 2 and 4 metres, and in weight between 150 and 650 kilograms. Bottlenose dolphins can live for more than 40 years.

Bottlenose dolphins live in groups, typically of 10-30 members, called pods, but group size varies from single individuals up to more than 1,000. Their diets consist mainly of forage fish. Dolphins often work as a team to harvest fish schools, but they also hunt individually. They search for prey, primarily using echolocation, which is similar to sonar. They emit clicking sounds and listen for the return echoes to determine the location and shape of nearby items, including potential prey. Bottlenose dolphins also use sound for communication, including squeaks and whistles emitted from the blowhole and sounds emitted through body language, such as leaping from the water and slapping their tails on the water surface.

There have been numerous investigations of bottlenose dolphin intelligence. Their considerable intelligence has driven interaction with humans. Bottlenose dolphins are popular from aquarium shows and television programs such as Flipper. They have also been trained by the military to locate sea mines or detect and mark enemy divers. In some areas, they cooperate with local fishermen by driving fish into their nets and eating the fish that escape. Some



encounters with humans are harmful to the dolphins: people hunt them for food, and dolphins are killed inadvertently as a bycatch of tuna fishing.

Dolphins have sharp eyesight. The eyes are located at the sides of the head and have a tapetum lucidum, or reflecting membrane, at the back of the retina, which aids vision in dim light. Their horseshoe-shaped, double-



slit pupils enable dolphins to have good vision both in air and underwater, despite the different densities of these media. When under water, the eyeball's lens serves to focus light, whereas in the in-air environment, the typically bright light serves to contract the specialized pupil, resulting in sharpness from a smaller aperture (similar to a pinhole camera).

The bottlenose dolphin has a single blowhole located on the dorsal surface of the head consisting of a hole and a muscular flap. The flap is closed during muscle relaxation and opens during contraction. Dolphins are voluntary breathers, and must deliberately surface and open their blowholes to get air. They can store almost twice as much oxygen in proportion to their body weight as a human can. This is an adaptation to diving. The bottlenose dolphin typically rises to the surface to breathe through its blowhole two to three times per minute, although it can remain submerged for up to 20 minutes.

Dolphins can breathe while "half-asleep". During the sleeping cycle, one brain hemisphere remains active, while the other hemisphere shuts down. The active hemisphere handles surfacing and breathing behaviour. The daily sleeping cycle lasts for about 8 hours, in increments of minutes to hours. During the sleeping cycle, they remain near the surface, swimming slowly or "logging", and occasionally closing one eye.



Some large shark species, such as the great white shark, prey on the bottlenose dolphin, especially calves. The bottlenose dolphin is capable of defending itself by charging the predator; dolphin 'mobbing' behaviour of sharks can occasionally prove fatal for the shark. Bottlenose dolphins are still killed in dolphin drive hunts for their meat or to eliminate

competition for fish. Bottlenose dolphins (and several other dolphin species) often travel with tuna, and can get caught in tuna nets, which can kill the dolphins. Boycotts of tuna products led to the concept of "dolphin-safe" labelling for fishing methods that avoid endangering dolphins. Bottlenose dolphins are not endangered and their future is stable because of their abundance and adaptability. However, specific



populations are threatened due to various environmental changes.