Final Evaluation Report

Your Details	
Full Name	Shanan Atkins
Project Title	Seeking solutions to the human-wildlife conflict around shark nets in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.
Application ID	28983-1
Date of this Report	29/12/2002

1. Indicate the level of achievement of the project's original objectives and include any relevant comments on factors affecting this.

Objective	Not achieved	Partially achieved	Fully achieved	Comments
1. Understand the current system: identify all the stakeholders and examine their needs and capacity, know the socio-political context of the system, map the decision pathway, so as to ultimately identify leverage points.			▉	Based on interviews, literature and data, we have identified and characterised the stakeholders and their interactions, knowledge and perceptions of the current and alternative methods of bather protection, and their perceptions of the obstacles and opportunities for change. We have reported the political context (the legislation and hence accountability) and what is known about the social context in KwaZulu-Natal. Two manuscripts are nearly ready for publication and more will follow. We have also begun to disseminate these results among the stakeholders (see below).
2. Build community: share information about the various needs and perspectives among the stakeholders and create a more cohesive collaboration network.			▉	We have tightened the network of stakeholders who work in different parts of the social-ecological system (e.g., 3 levels of government and various government "entities", plus non-governmental and academics). Although some of them do interact generally, the flow of information about alternative strategies and solutions is limited. Our project facilitated an increase in the connections among the stakeholders and provided opportunities for them to coevolve their understanding of the issues. Many of them volunteered to start a "working group" which has begun to meet quarterly.
3. Propose alternatives: identify other methods of protecting bathers and select the ones worth testing (using the stakeholder network).		▉		I have secured an Australian scientist (Dr McPhee) who has published the most comprehensive assessment of alternatives (and participated in Australia's recent trials of alternatives) to present to the working group of stakeholders during November 2022 but

			at the last minute he had to postpone. There is still much to do.

2. Describe the three most important outcomes of your project.

a). Improved interactions among stakeholders and attention on the issue
We have tightened the network of stakeholders who work in different parts of the social-ecological system (e.g., government and non-governmental and academics). These stakeholders got to connect and coevolve their understanding of the issues at our social learning platform.

b). A working group to support the Sharks Board in accelerating change
At our first meeting, the knowledge cafe, half of the stakeholders volunteered to start a working group to drive the process of change forward. We have met twice, and the legal director of the provincial department is drafting formal terms of reference.

c). Identifying the lack of awareness among important stakeholders of the lethal intent of the shark nets
Our study identified an important problem: some of the government stakeholders who are part of the decision-making process were not aware that the nets and hooks are set to intentionally catch and kill sharks. We have set about rectifying this in a careful manner.

3. Explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled.

Covid-19 was an unforeseen difficulty and South Africa was particularly hard hit. We wanted to gather the stakeholders together in person because we believe that face-to-face interactions have great value when working with conflicts. Eventually we had to just use an online platform and we hired a professional facilitator, and it went better than we anticipated. It is a trade-off but there are advantages. There was clearly significant interest in the issue and the interactions among the stakeholders were very good. We went on to host two additional meetings which would not have been possible if people had had to travel.

Covid-19 also resulted in a loss of other funding sources and there were times that I had to seek part-time employment that was not conservation work which caused more general delays in the progress of the project.

4. Describe the involvement of local communities and how they have benefitted from the project.

The local government is a stakeholder but beyond their involvement, the community was not specifically involved. A spinoff of the project though, is that we attracted an MSc student who is now investigating the perceptions, knowledge and traditions around sharks in the Zulu traditional communities of KwaZulu-Natal that she hails from.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

I feel compelled to take the next steps in this project. I have secured a job that is not related but have negotiated to dedicate half a day per week to this project. I will also continue to host the working group.

6. How do you plan to share the results of your work with others?

We plan to submit all five empirical PhD chapters that map the conflict and document the social learning platform for publication in the scientific literature. The editor of the district newspaper is a citizen scientist involved in our dolphin research project and we will disseminate the results of the study slowly and build momentum. We have secured a website in which we will also share information and our animation.

7. Looking ahead, what do you feel are the important next steps?

Maintain the heightened information flow and keep the working group together and busy. Take the strategy that was drafted at the social learning platform and convert it to an implementation strategy with specific actions, stipulating who is responsible for each proposed action, and what resources are required. Engage the national government (a particularly influential and interested stakeholder) on the findings of the assessment of ecological impact and work the implementation strategy into our national Shark Biodiversity Management Plan.

8. Did you use The Rufford Foundation logo in any materials produced in relation to this project? Did the Foundation receive any publicity during the course of your work?

Yes, scientific community: I presented various aspects of the work every year at The Conservation Symposium and at the International Congress for Conservation Biology. The manuscripts I have prepared for peer-reviewed publication all include acknowledgement of your support. Stakeholders: in the presentation that I gave at the knowledge cafe and in the report that followed.

9. Provide a full list of all the members of your team and their role in the project.

I so appreciate my team: **Dr Mauricio Cantor** and **Prof Neville Pillay** supervised the work.
Geremy Cliff, who was the Head of Research at the KwaZulu-Natal Sharks Board, retired during the project but continued to collaborate with me and help me to be balanced by patiently sharing the Sharks Board's point of view, inner workings and their constraints. I collaborated closely with **Dr Judy Mann-Lang** who helped with the social science aspects of the project. The GRD (Gesellschaft zur Rettung der Delphine e.V.) administered the grant on my behalf and provided additional support and encouragement.

10. Any other comments?

The Rufford Foundation's support was more than just financial. It meant so much to have your organisation see the importance of the project and believe in my ability to do the work. Thank you.

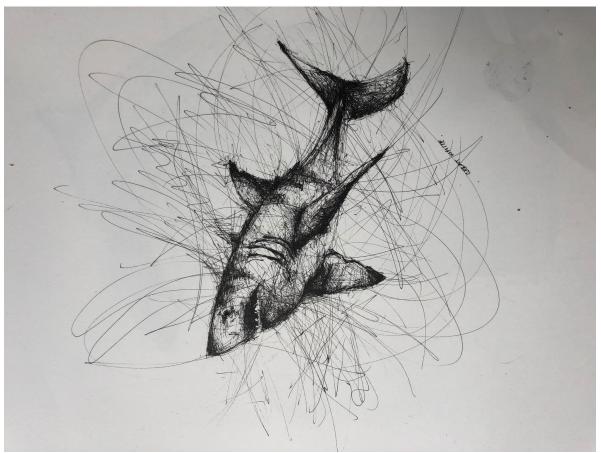Project's attractive logo designed by Emily Higgins.

Image that artist Mandy Coppes drew for this project that speaks to the conflict surrounding sharks.

Respect sharks. © Jeff Puntukhoff.