

Southern African Institute of Forestry



Delivering a professional service to forestry

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Editorial

Dear Reader,
 What a month ! I think everybody will agree that we as residents in South Africa and us associated with the Forest and Forest products industry, experienced a dramatic and shocking month in more than one way. Not only did we face a tightening of COVID-19 Lockdown restrictions to Level 4, but we also have to adapt our Newsletter to comply with the so-called POPI Act (Protection of Information Act). The SAIF value you as our members and would like to ensure you that we will conduct our business and communication in such a way as to protect your personal information and privacy. You will notice that the Birthday calendar has been adjusted to only show the names of the persons who celebrate their birthdays in July without showing the individual dates.

I would also like to extend an invitation to each one of you to send any queries / comments to Corine or myself as well as to indicate whether you would prefer not to receive the Newsletter and other correspondence via E-mail.

Unfortunately, the month of July will also be remembered for tragic events such as the large scale unrest and looting in Kwazulu-Natal as well as the death of one of our most respected and active members known throughout the forestry industry in S.A namely Dr. Jaap Steenkamp the CEO of SAFCA and serving the industry at various forums. He will be missed and our hearts go out to his next of kin & staff !

Please accept my apology for the very late submission of the July Newsletter.



SAIF Calendar July 2021 : Photographer : Leigh Williams : Cinnabar bracket fungi on Eucalyptus ficifolia stump



From the President's desk July : Plastic free month

There are so many themes for special days or months celebrated internationally nowadays that one can hardly keep up with all the various days / themes related to the environmental, social and other worthy causes. It came to my attention a few days ago that the month of July has been designated as "Plastic Free Month". If we take a minute to think of it, we soon realize that plastic in one form or another has become such an integral part of our everyday lives and almost everything we touch contains plastic as part of that object.

This gives rise to several questions namely : How do we get to a position of being "plastic free" or is that noble goal not achievable and only a pipe dream? If as the polymer experts tell us, plastic has only been around for less than a century, what did we as humans do before we started using plastic to manufacture many objects ? Another question springs to mind for us involved in the forest and forest products industry, whether there are any opportunities to replace plastic with wood or wood derived products and furthermore which benefits might natural products manufactured from a renewable resource have which may give it the edge over the equivalent product made of plastic ?

How does Plastic Impact the Environment ?

"Plastic can be used to save wildlife, but it can also be extremely dangerous, especially when we **over-produce, over-use, and over-consume and then fail to reuse, recycle, and/or dispose of it properly.**



Most plastics are not biodegradable and cannot be broken down naturally by bacteria or other living things, and as a result, most of it ends up in wildlife habitats where it poses a threat to plants and animals." It is actually frightening to note that the manufacturing of plastic only really took off since as recently as 2004 and that 422 million tonnes of plastic are currently being produced annually !

Plastic Pollution:

Pollution may lead to biodiversity loss and degradation of the natural environment. Some of the potential long-term impacts are not even known yet.

We are often confronted in the media with some horrific stories from nature where animals are the victims of plastic in nature. The plastic straws which got stuck in turtles respiratory channels and obstruct their airways and other marine animals are also impacted . These well-known examples often stir up negative emotions. The irresponsible use of plastic products and accompanying plastic pollution on land and in particular in the world's oceans have dire consequences and appears to be the biggest problem. Plastics make up 75% of marine litter and breaks up into smaller fragments called microplastics which have been identified in commercial fish consumed by humans. Plastics are designed to last and effectively be "indestructible" and is not designed to decompose. Experts do however point out that most plastic products can be recycled. Unfortunately, way too much plastic products or fractions of plastic still land up in rivers, on beaches and on land-fill sites. Polymer experts say that most plastic products will eventually break down in mainly assisted by the sun. The question however remains namely after how long?

Recent efforts to reduce use of plastic :

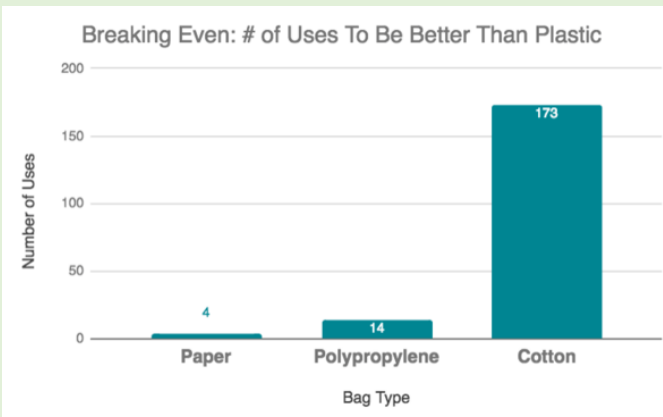
Plastic certainly revolutionized our society and world and it is difficult to imagine a world without any plastic. There were some partially successful efforts to reduce the use of plastic in South Africa.





A well known and world famous view of Table Mountain in the background but with a very sad sight of plastic pollution in the foreground

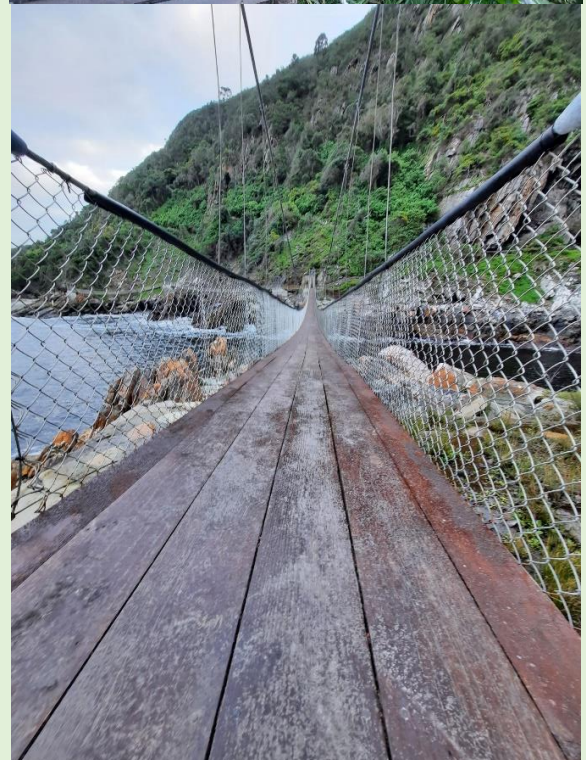
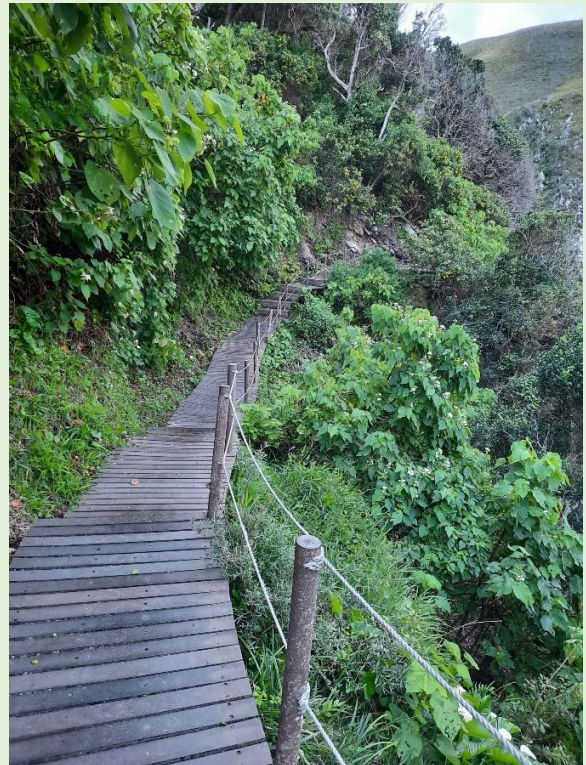
One of them was to place a prize on the use of plastic shopping bags with the objective to encourage the re-use of plastic bags or encourage the use of paper bags as an alternative. Unfortunately, old habits die hard and after initially reducing the use of plastic bags, we continue to use plastic shopping bags and we got used to pay for them and most supermarkets still offer them for packing your groceries.



Question: When does a reusable bag become more environmentally friendly than a disposable bag?

Paper bags have proved to be superior to plastic and even re-usable bags from an environmental point of view according to the undermentioned study by David Evans December 26, 2019 : “ Comments on Reusable vs. Disposable Bags: What’s Better for The Environment? “

Recycled Plastic for outdoor use :



Boardwalk constructed of plastic wood (top) and suspension bridge walkway constructed of timber/ wood (bottom) both photographed at Tsitsikamma National Park



The recycling of plastic created opportunities to manufacture substitute products for applications traditionally manufactured from wood (timber) . Some of these products like recycled plastic wood eg. Eco wood offer several benefits eg. UV protection , being maintenance free and also immune to insect attacks and rotting. Some manufacturers claim that their products will last for more than 60 years will be maintenance free. It is interesting to note that at the Tsitsikamma National Park (Storms River mouth) SANParks used plastic wood for most of their boardwalks and outdoor furniture but placed their trust in traditional lumber when constructing (cladding) of the suspension bridge crossing the Storms River. It makes you think , does'nt it ! If you add to that then when a huge veldfire started close to the same National Park in 2007 and spread into the Park, the fire consumed almost the entire plastic wood boardwalk. Despite all the benefits of the so-called plastic wood , it is not fire resistant and there are also questions regarding its strength and durability.

Where to from here ? :

The Three “R’s” of recycling provides some guidance on how to reduce the impact of plastic pollution :

1. **Reducing** our overall consumption is about respecting our natural resources, only using what we need, and refusing unnecessary excess. Take the Japanese ‘Mottainai’ lifestyle approach— which teaches respect for the planet and its natural resources by reducing wasteful behaviour, using only what is needed.
2. **Reuse** is key to increasing the lifespan of the things we use. This includes repairing or upcycling our items to give them a new lease on life.
3. **Recycling** the waste we eventually generate is key to closing the loop in a circular economic model.

A fourth “R” can be added to these three namely “**Responsibility**”. If all of us act responsibly and think about the potential implications of our actions, we can make a positive difference.

We as resilient foresters and wood processors, should look for opportunities (innovations) in the midst of the problems associated with the use of plastic. It may also create opportunities for wood as substitute product for plastic products .

How ironic will it be if we substitute some of the products which initially substituted wood products with the very product which it substituted and in turn benefit the environment and the planet and its inhabitants !

References and for further reading:

1. <https://www.plasticfreejuly.org/>
2. <https://www.awarenessdays.com/awareness-days-calendar/plastic-free-july-2021/>
3. <https://twofarmers.co.uk/plastic-free-july-and-our-mission-to-reduce-single-use-plastic/>
4. <https://www.greenmatters.com/p/plastic-free-july>
5. <https://www.perlego.com/book/1814414/plastic-waste-and-recycling-environmental-impact-societal-issues-prevention-and-solutions-pdf>
6. <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2020/07/10/general/mottainai-grandma-cartoon/>
7. RSG podcasts : 9/7/21 & 14/7/21 <https://www.rsg.co.za/rsg/?s=Plastiekvr+y+Julie>



Enjoy your next cup of coffee ! Drink responsibly....



A frog in a pool.

By Rob Thompson

Sometimes I feel like a frog.

It all started when, as young matriculant pondering over a career choice, I heard people waxing lyrical about forestry.

“What could go wrong I thought?”

Riding on horseback across pristine natural plateaus, planting the occasional tree for harvesting in 25 years time and being paid for all this effort. The choice seemed to be a perfect fit for my personal aspirations at the time.

I accordingly willingly plunged into the forestry pool via my decision to pursue a forestry degree through Stellenbosch University. A few beers later I had graduated, knowing probably as much about real forestry as I did before I commenced with the study process.

Next followed a stint in the army and my pool got slightly warmer.

“Don’t worry” they said, “you’ll end up doing forestry stuff during your national service!”

Well, standing beat in remote areas in temperatures ranging from freezing cold to intense heat, bore no resemblance to the content of any forestry lecture that I had attended previously no matter how hard I tried to reconcile the situation. But more on standing beat later on...

And then it was off to work...for real. The pool temperature increased a tad more.

“Why did no-one ever tell me about the thinning enumerations that had to be done?”

“Does Head Office not realise that bramble has thorns?”

“...and all the report writing, by hand nogal. Yes, I fully realise that my handwriting is awful, but no one told me that this would be a career limiting defect. Could we not budget for a word processor in the office?”

Glory be, the word processor arrived and yet the pool did not cool down at all. Along with the processor, came a mainframe computer which one communicated to via Lotus. No, not the yoga position, but rather formulas and columns and columns of numbers.

“And ye shall henceforth compile your annual budget on this modern wonder, and said budget shall balance perfectly lest you wish pestilence and angst to rain down”, came the decree from Head Office. Is this pool getting even hotter?

“The radio network is to be decommissioned. Here is a mobile device called a cell phone which you will use to communicate”.

The issued Nokia 3110 came without a gun bearer which reduced the thrill of this new modern connectivity given that ones’ trousers fell down if you did not have a solid belt upon which to carry its weight. That and the angst of finding signal when required to send an important message all added further heat to the pool.

Talking of heat, detailed fire plan compilation was an early required skill set of every forester worthy of the title. Firebreak layout and fire combat strategy all carefully considered and recorded for quick reference in times of emergency. With all the most likely natural ignition points identified, what further could go wrong?

The evening that we located and extinguished 31 candles widely distributed and set in the forest litter, gave us the first inkling of the future of fire protection and what it would entail. Fire-tenders morphed into colossal engineering marvels and fire watch towers were replaced by image comparison remote camera installations. The day that our indigenous forest no longer acted as a natural fire break but caught alight and contributed to what was then one of the largest commercial fires experienced to date, was the day we realized that times are a changing. The change in climate added a few more degrees to the heat of my pool.

My pool, as well as many others, experienced a great deal of turbulence during the first wave of restructuring within the forestry industry. Retrenchments, new ownership and rationalisation processes ended up with migrations from pool to



to pool and others being left stranded with no where to go. As I acclimatized to my new found pool, it became apparent that the ambient temperature was not likely to subside even though the surroundings had changed and the upheaval has subsided, for awhile.

Local human aspirations lead to disputes on the work front, labour unrest and necessary protracted interventions. Political dispensations require work place change whilst simultaneously attending to the need to ensure improved productivity due to higher demand for product and service. Is it just me or is it really getting hot in here?

With overall timber consumption being ever more influenced by global consumer behaviour, our local industry has rapidly become more exposed to global dynamics. Japan and China's race towards trade domination, the USA Chinese Trade war, the COVID pandemic, the ascendancy of China as economic powerhouse are all more recent factors influencing the outcomes of my organization and the well being of those swimming in my pool.

Global, rather than local inter-organizational competitiveness is now the norm. Personnel are called upon to contribute on a far higher level than before. Who would have thought thirty odd years ago, that foresters would now require diplomacy, political science, marketing and strategy as essential skill sets? One has to trawl the edges of the pool now to find a cooler spot!

Forestry is no longer an isolated and specialist industry. It is intrinsically interlinked and woven into a myriad of other industries, processes and products. Sawtimber, pulpwood, poles, wood wool, biomass residue, eco-services and many other products are now quite plausibly rendered from a single planted area. Products from dissolving pulp add further layers to the outputs of the industry and the demands it places on personnel who operate therein. The edges of the pool are no longer providing as much cool relief as they once did previously.

The industry does not escape the external influences that come its way in lessor or greater degrees.

The recent unrest in KwaZulu Natal and Gauteng, which qualified as a greater degree. had us all on tender hooks and anxious about our livelihoods, our forest resource, our families and homes. Going back to my earlier reference to standing beat, many of us ended up on farms, on road blockades and on production sites standing guard and defending property, resource and lives from a marauding horde. Many of you would have thought, just like me, that this was a Deja Vu moment, a return to standing beat, weapon in hand, not really knowing what to expect next. Who would have thought? Its really hot in the pool now!

As I stood there at my post, the development in my mind's eye of an analogy of a frog in gradually boiling water, assisted to while away the time.

For many of us, our careers have advanced in ways that we would never have anticipated. Even for the youngsters, there is no way of escaping this. The pool in which you swim will gain heat from all of the unforeseen advancements and changes that one has to adapt to.

Therein lies the crux. We all have to adapt or boil. Its as simple as that.

Special Mention & Appreciation :

A special word of thanks to Rob Thompson for this month's contribution which was done under difficult and traumatic conditions. Rob experienced a major interruption when compiling his eagerly anticipated contribution when he had to "press the pause button" due to the chaotic unrest which affected very large parts of Kwazulu-Natal earlier in July 2021. Pietermaritzburg and the forestry industry were also directly affected, and we are thankful that although huge damage was done to infrastructure , that damage to forest estates could be limited. Many of us watched this from a distance and were amazed about the huge scale of looting and destruction. Our hearts and prayers go out to all our colleagues and members who were directly affected by the unrest.



Accolades : Southern Forests Journal

All of us at the SAIF would like to congratulate Hannél Ham, our dedicated editor and former President of the SAIF with this wonderful achievement.

*The 2020 Impact Factor for Southern Forests, which has just been released, is **1.193**. The 5-year impact Factor is **1.668**. Once again these are both record scores for the journal.*

Below is an extract from the letter submitted by Sarah Cohen the Sales & Marketing Administrator addressed to Hannél in her capacity as Editor in Chief.



Dear Hannel,

Congratulations on the record Impact Factor scores.

I have updated these scores on the NISC website. In addition, please find attached a marketing jpeg should you wish to circulate this with your networks.

I have put this news on the NISC Facebook page as well as the NISC twitter account.

Best Regards,

Sarah Cohen
Sales & Marketing Administrator

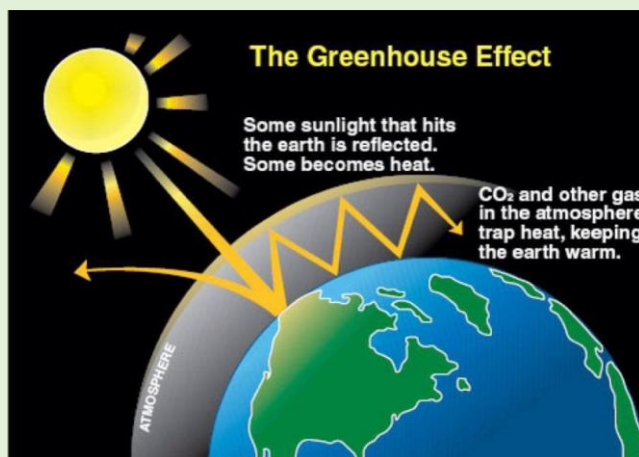
The SAIF celebrate this major achievement with Hannél. Keep up the good work !

Climate Change and the Forest Sector in South Africa

Abstract taken from a Talk presented by Leo Long (Specialist Climate Change) employed by SAFCOL at the Mpumalanga AGM on 18 June 2021.

What is Climate Change?

Climate change is an observed change in global or regional climate patterns, attributed largely to the increased levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide (and other Greenhouse Gases/GHG) produced by the use of fossil fuels.



Climate Change risks against Six Capitals

1. Financial
2. Social & Relationship
3. Manufactured
4. Human
5. Natural
6. Intellectual

For each of the Six Capitals the Climate Change Impact , Key Risk Indicators , Potential Results and Mitigation Measures are discussed.

Focus on Capital no. 5 “Natural”

1. **Increase in extreme weather events** eg. Droughts & floods with associated extreme weather events. This is likely to cause damage to biological, immovable, human assets etc.



Potential Mitigation measures to be considered include identification & further research into tolerant species; conducting specific risk assessment; explore innovative silviculture practices; explore alternative land use options

2. **Reduction in Site Quality** : will lead to reduction in yields/ volumes; reduced product quality,-revenues; loss of markets : Some mitigation measures include: Explore new silviculture practices, tolerant species.
3. **Increase in Pest & Disease outbreaks** (events & new/other pests & diseases : Increase in tree damage; tree susceptibility ; reduced growth, yields & quality : Mitigation measures: Tolerant species, reduce stress (pruning & thinning) ; Biological controls ; collaboration with FABI etc.
4. **Reduction in plantable area** : leads to reduction in revenue base , revenue generation,- sustainable cut, -market share ; risk to business sustainability :Mitigation: Optimise Site-species matching ; plant tolerant spp. Search for alternative - & suitable land; explore alt.land-use options
5. **Increase in environmental degradation(biodiversity loss)** : ecosystem failure, loss of soil. Assets, -ecotourism, loss of revenue; reduced business sustainability: Mitigation measures: Reduce GHG emissions ; improve resource conservation; Explore climate smart forestry best practices; compliance with international standards eg. FSC.

Industry response

It should be noted that risks posed by & climate change are not limited to any one company, industry or country. This is a global challenge, requiring combined effort by all.

SA has established a dedicated Climate Change Working Group hosted under FSA with aim of providing a united front in response to related legislation & collaboration eg. Research & mitigation projects.

Requests for the full presentation , should be directed to Leo Long at Leo@safcol.co.za

Tribute to Jaap Steenkamp

(7 Sept. 1958 – 22 July 2021)



Jaap addressing participants at the Knysna Timber Festival in March 2020

It is with great sadness that the SAIF join others in the Forest and Forest Products Industry in bidding our colleague and friend farewell after he passed away following a short sickness following COVID-19 complications.

In the word of his wife Careen, “ a big tree has fallen” but in the same breath, “ to create space for new & young trees” . Jaap’s death leaves a major void & legacy and his absence will certainly be felt by his family, friends, SAFCA colleagues and other colleagues in the Industry. Donald Grant, Personal Advisor to the Premier of the Western Cape, and in frequent contact with Jaap over the past few years summarised it very well in the following words : “Jaap was a magnificent person and will be sorely missed in the George Community and in the Forestry Industry”

This is the legacy he leaves and it is now up to us and in particular the younger generation to take the baton and run the race !

Finally quoting Donald again: “My sincere condolences to his family, colleagues and friends. May he rest in peace and rise in glory”. We at the SAIF certainly would like to echo these words.

For a comprehensive tribute to Jaap’s life, please refer to the link shown below :

<https://saforestryonline.co.za/articles/tribute-to-dr-jaap-steenkamp/>



Forestry South Africa : Women in Forestry

Phila Ndhlovu



Sappi Research Officer

Qualifications : BSc Agriculture

Research

“I work for Nursery Technologies, as part of the Propagation Team. We mainly deal with vegetative propagation, which refers to multiplying a plant from stem, shoots, roots, etc. This ensures that the genetic makeup of superior plants/trees are not lost. My job is to root the shoots of Eucalyptus and Pinus species. Some species are difficult to root, and I conduct various research trials aimed at improving rooting and growth of cuttings.”

Message to young scientists :

“Pursue your dreams fiercely. Never let anything or anyone stand in the way of achieving your dreams, not even self-doubt. Always tell yourself, “I am worthy, I am capable and I shall conquer.”

https://youtu.be/rUgETn0o_Hs

With acknowledgment to



FORESTRY SOUTH AFRICA™



XV WORLD FORESTRY CONGRESS

Building a Green, Healthy and Resilient Future with Forests

2-6 May 2021 | Coex, Seoul, Republic of Korea

Vol. 5 / June 2021

Reminder: Call for abstracts for papers and posters ends on 30 June 2021 and 3 September for videos. The submission platform for side event proposals is open, and the deadline for submission is 30 July 2021.

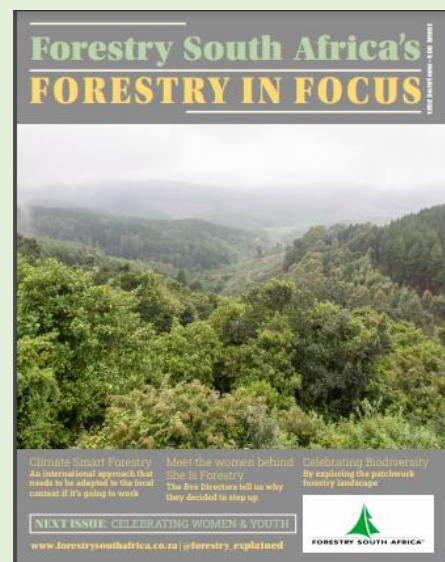
For more information : Visit the website

<https://wfc2021korea.org/>



2000 Year Old in S.A called The Tree of Life.

<https://9gag.com/gag/ap2X6OB>



<https://forestrysouthafrica.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/FSA-Magazine-Issue-Three-Final-2.pdf>



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JULY BIRTHDAYS

THE SAIF WOULD LIKE TO CONGRATULATE THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS WITH THEIR BIRTHDAYS THIS MONTH.

VALINTINE S.
FERREIRA E.P.
STAAL D.L.
PALLET R.N.
HUBBLE J.H.
WINTER A.M.
EATWELL K.A.
HOWARD M.D.
TYHODA L.

DE WAAL N
KUNNEKE A
STANSFIELD P.J.
McINTYRE P.
DA COSTA D.
GARDNER R.A.W.
MACK R.C.
McARTHUR R.

WISHING YOU EVERYTHING OF THE BEST FOR THE YEAR AHEAD!

WE TRUST THAT YOU DID ENJOY YOUR BIRTHDAY !

