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To Whom It May Concern

### Support for Buffelskloof Nature Reserve (BNR) Initiative

My Postgraduate students and I have collected “resurrection plants” (species with the unique ability of vegetative desiccation tolerance), predominantly *Xerophyta viscosa*, *Craterostigma wilmsii* and *Myrthothamnus flabellifolius*, from Buffelskloof Nature Reserve since 1994. On each occasion, a few individuals (as befitting of the conservation status of the reserve) of species concerned were collected and transported to my laboratory at UCT where further physiological and molecular work was performed. Over the years, my group has published 32 papers and several reviews based on research conducted on these resurrection plants. Eight students have attained MSc degrees and 5 have achieved the PhD degree as a consequence of having access to this plant material. Indeed, a recent seminal paper (attached), published in Nature Plants on the genome of the resurrection plant *X. viscosa*, is a prime example of the value of our relationship with the managers (John and Sandy Burrows) and trustees of the reserve. The sequencing was based on an individual collected from Buffelskloof, in so doing adding credence to all prior (and subsequent) publications on this species, as the germplasm on which work was conducted has been consistent.

I personally have achieved great success as a result of my collaboration with BNR, having won 10 national and international awards, the most recent being the L’Oreal-UNESCO award in life sciences (2012) that ‘recognizes women whose exceptional careers in science have opened up new and sometimes revolutionary ways of improving human well-being’ and the EPFL WISH Foundation Erma Hamburger award (2015) for ‘ground breaking work in phytology and being an exceptional role model to plant biologists worldwide’. This is indeed in large part due to the fact that I have managed to consistently secure excellent plant material from BNR. I am indeed reliant on them for continued success in my field and my ultimate dream of producing drought tolerant crops for food security purposes in Africa.

While I have emphasised the importance of BNR in physical outputs, it is also important to consider their role in mentoring my postgraduate students during the periods of plant collection. The facilities provided on BNR to accommodate students during collection, together with the personal interest and dedication given by the Burrows to the actual plant collection and discussions pertaining to their use, is to be highly recommended. I also collect resurrection plant species (not available on BNR) for use in my studies, but can honestly say that the level of support provided is minimal in comparison to that supplied by BNR.

In conclusion, I cannot voice more profoundly my request that you consider the initiative undertaken by John Burrows and the John Rae Trust worthy of financial support for their ongoing operation. Please feel free to call me, should you wish any further clarification on issues pertaining to support of BNR for their ongoing operation.

Yours truly

Jill M. Farrant