

July 2024

30  
YEARS OF  
DFFE

# Environment Quarterly

Kwartaalikse Omgewingsverslag • Tikologo ka Kotara • Mupo nga Kotara



**DFFE welcomes new leadership**

**Budget Vote 2024/25**



forestry, fisheries  
& the environment

Department:  
Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



# Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment

# 2024

## January

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### ENVIRONMENT DAYS

2 February	World Wetlands Day
3 March	World Wildlife Day
23 March	World Meteorological Day
22 April	Earth Day
12 May	World Migratory Bird Day
22 May	International Day for Biological Diversity
5 June	World Environment Day
8 June	World Oceans Day
17 June	World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought
31 July	World Ranger Day
16 September	International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer
22 September	World Rhino Day
1-30 September	National Arbor Month
1-31 October	National Transport Month
21 November	World Fisheries Day

### PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

1 January	New Year's Day
21 March	Human Rights Day
29 March	Good Friday
1 April	Family Day
27 April	Freedom Day
1 May	Workers' Day
16 June	Youth Day
17 June	Public Holiday
18 July	Nelson Mandela International Day
9 August	National Women's Day
24 September	Heritage Day
25 September	Public Holiday
16 December	Day of Reconciliation
25 December	Christmas Day
26 December	Day of Goodwill



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## About the back cover image:

### The Hluleka Nature Reserve, Eastern Cape

Lying 30 kilometres south of Port St Johns, Hluleka Nature Reserve is one of the Wild Coast's best kept secrets. This tranquil reserve showcases a diverse range of eco systems – rocky seashores, golden beaches, lagoons and lush forests of quinine, coral, stink ebony and Natal fig trees.

The reserve is comprised of a 772ha area, formerly known as Old Strachan's Grant Farm, and includes an area of coastline as well as two magnificent forest reserves, the Congwane Mtombo and Ndabeni Hluleka Forest Reserves. It is these forests which characterise the rolling landscape of the Wild Coast coastline and the riverine gorges that intersect it, and which make for a nature lover's paradise.



To use this QR code conveniently you must have a smartphone equipped with a camera and a QR code reader/scanner application feature.



# Editorial: DFFE welcomes new leadership



## Dear Valued Stakeholder,

It is our distinct pleasure to extend a heartfelt welcome to the newly appointed Minister, Dr Dion George and the Deputy Ministers, Ms Bernice Swarts and Mr Narend Singh who will be at the helm of the Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment. With their diverse expertise and commitment

to sustainability, we are optimistic about a future where conservation and economic growth go hand in hand.

We look forward to their innovative strategies and collaborative efforts to protect our forests, oceans, and wildlife, ensuring a vibrant and sustainable environment for generations to come. Join us in extending our best wishes to the new Minister, and the Deputy Ministers as they take on this crucial responsibility.

The synergy between forestry, fisheries, and environmental conservation is integral to fostering biodiversity, mitigating climate change, and ensuring the well-being of both wildlife and communities. In this critical role, the new ministers are entrusted with the vital task of harmonizing conservation efforts with socio-economic development to create a balanced and resilient future for South Africa.

We anticipate that their tenure will be marked by innovative policies, collaborative partnerships, and a steadfast commitment to

environmental stewardship. Their vision and expertise are instrumental in crafting strategies that strike a harmonious balance between nature and progress, protecting our natural resources while advancing sustainable growth.

As avid champions of environmental sustainability, we are eager to witness the transformative impact of their leadership on our landscapes, oceans, and communities. Through their dedication and strategic foresight, we are confident that they will navigate the complex challenges of our environment with grace and determination.

## Editor

*Erica*



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# 2024 WORLD RANGER DAY

WEDNESDAY, 31 JULY 2024



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# BUDGET VOTE 2024/25: DFFE to ramp up poacher crackdown

By Zibuse Ndlovu



**Archive Image:** With the rhino dehorning programme which began in April 2024, there has been some easing of the poaching pressure in KZN. Strategic dehorning of rhino in certain core areas of the SANParks is one of the Kruger National Parks' management actions to minimise the impact of rhino poaching.

Working with law enforcement authorities, we will continue to intensify enforcement and contribute to successful prosecutions of poachers. A rhino should be able to walk around in the field with its horn intact and not be vulnerable to attack." These were the sentiments by the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment, Dr Dion George during the first Budget Vote of the 7th administration held on 15 July 2024, at Good Hope Chamber, Parliament, in Cape Town.

Delivering his maiden Budget Vote speech for the Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment (DFFE), Minister George said there was an urgent need to rectify a flawed system that currently reward harm over protection.

"There is something wrong in a system that incentivises harm instead of protection and we need to fix that system. We saw an increase in rhino poaching in 2023, with Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park in KwaZulu Natal (KZN) facing the brunt of the poaching," said Minister George.

The dehorning programme, initiated in April 2024, has effectively alleviated pressure in KZN, and a strong partnership between the SAPS and SANParks Environmental Crimes Investigations Unit has led to successful prosecutions and convictions resulting in

lengthy sentences. "To bolster the rhino population, we are finalising the biodiversity management plan for black and white rhinoceros," stated Minister George. Moreover, the Department aims to intensify enforcement of environmental laws, combat poaching of fauna and flora, and end illegal fishing. Furthermore, efforts will be made to enhance regulatory frameworks to ensure that conservation initiatives support sustainable economic growth and job creation.

## Biodiversity and Conservation



Above: Captive Lion. Image by: Rik Schots, Pixels.

The Ministerial Task Team, assigned to recommend voluntary exit pathways and options for captive lions, has concluded its report. The report includes recommendations on how to phase down the industry, taking into account the well-being of the animals and the impact on jobs for the workers in such facilities. Regulations on Threatened and Protected Species were finalised and will be tabled in the National Council of Provinces during this financial year. The NEMBA Bill has been completed and has been released for public comments.

"To attract investments in the biodiversity economy, we profiled 59 bankable businesses on the biodiversity sector investment portal. As a result, two projects attracted an investment of USD 450 000 to promote conservation and community well-being. The two beneficiary sites are the Madikwe Barokologadi Community Property Association (CPA) in the North West and the Blyde River Canyon Nature Reserve. This investment will be used to develop a management plan and implement a biodiversity credit system," said Minister George.

Additionally, to reach its goal of a 30% expansion of the conservation estate by 2030 for both terrestrial and marine ecosystems, the Department will adopt a mega-living landscape approach. This will include a mix of land acquisition, development of stewardship sites, and other effective conservation measures. "To make a significant contribution to the economy, the focus will be on developing biodiversity economy nodes to generate opportunities in ecotourism, the wildlife economy, and the bioprospecting sector. Additionally, we will design mega hubs in the provinces," said Minister George.

Meanwhile, SANParks has secured USD 10 million from the Global Environment Facility to fund a project that will implement the Mega Living Landscapes concept in the Barberton-Makhonjwa, Greater Addo, and Eastern Cape Grasslands landscapes and has developed a climate change preparedness strategy.

By the end of March 2024, the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) achieved an overall performance of 95% of the 2023/24 Annual Performance Plan targets. Implementation of the Garden's Infrastructure Maintenance and Development Programme with 50 priority infrastructure maintenance projects were completed, and 10 priority new infrastructure assets were developed.

A total of 1 467 000 visitors to national gardens, and over 217 000 children and youth participated in the "Kids in Gardens" Biodiversity Education Programme which is run in National Botanical and Zoological Gardens. "Botanical and zoological gardens continued to serve their roles as centres of social cohesion, supporting local economies and serving

as embassies of biodiversity and culture. This included hosting of events, the 31st season of the ever-popular Kirstenbosch Summer Sunset Concert Series and being available for supporting healthy outdoor activities," said Minister George.

## Climate Change, Air Quality and Just Transition

Over and above, the Department will focus on implementing ambitious actions in particular through the sectoral emission targets and carbon budget allocations to major companies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions including through the Just Energy Transition Investment Plan. "By the end of this financial year, we should have finalised the establishment of the Climate Change Respond Fund that we announced earlier this year. This will be crucial in financing adaptation and addressing loss and damage," said Minister George. The Department plans to accelerate investment in renewable energy projects. "We need to strengthen the country's transmission grid, and with our abundance of solar, wind and mineral resources, we are well positioned to generate jobs in renewable energy, green hydrogen, green steel, electric vehicles and other green products. A particular focus is Mpumalanga where many livelihoods are at risk, and we remain committed to facilitating new industries, new economic opportunities and sustainable jobs," said Minister George.

Minister George further emphasised that South Africa remained committed to the multilateral rules-based regime under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Paris Agreement. "We are preparing our 2nd nationally determined contribution through technical work, and then wide consultation will take into account the outcome of the first global stocktake, and we will communicate another fair and ambitious contribution in 2025," said Minister George.

Minister George commended the South African Weather Service (SAWS) for continuously providing dependable public weather, aviation, maritime forecasts, and severe weather information for the benefit of all South Africans. "Over the medium-term, R375 million will be allocated to improve and optimize the entity's RADAR, surface observation, air quality, and ICT infrastructure networks, among other priorities. Much-needed RADAR spares have been received and installed at sites requiring refurbishment," said Minister George.

## Fisheries and Compliance

So far, the Working for Fisheries Programme has supported 8 significant, job generating projects and anti-poaching measures continue to be a priority for the Fisheries Management Branch and the Marine Living Resources Fund (MLRF), to ensure sustainable management of South Africa's marine resources. Joint Law-Enforcement operations will continue to be conducted with partners under Operation Phakisa.





**Above:** The DFFE has committed to accelerate the support to all small-scale fisheries cooperatives in the four coastal provinces.

"We need to connect and re-connect our coastal communities to the ocean economy and encourage entrepreneurship," said the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment, Dr Dion George during his Budget Vote remarks and presentation to parliament.

Deputy Minister Singh said it was crucial to the Department that the socio-economic needs of fishing communities are thoroughly considered in all decision-making processes. "We remain committed to ensuring compliance with international fisheries obligations, which aim to promote the sustainable management of fisheries and marine resources and, most importantly, preserve our rich marine biodiversity," he said. Furthermore, the Department will review the Marine Living Resources Act, 18 of 1998, for the 2024/25 financial year. "Our work through the Fisheries Management Branch will focus on strategies to rebuild West Coast rock lobster and abalone resources. We will partner with stakeholders to combat poaching and Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) activities that impact South Africa's fish stocks," said the Deputy Minister.

## Oceans and Coasts

With regard to Oceans and Coasts, this financial year, the Department aims to monitor water quality in 45 priority areas in the four coastal provinces. "As we

navigate the complexities of marine conservation and protection, Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) emerge as indispensable tools in our arsenal. MPAs in South Africa support sustainable fisheries, boost tourism, conserve biodiversity, promote research and education, enhance climate resilience, and preserve cultural heritage," said the Deputy Minister Singh.

Since 2019, 20 new MPAs have been declared, increasing the conservation estate of the EEZ to 5.4%, totalling 42 MPAs. "We are committed to achieving the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework's goal of protecting at least 30% of coastal and marine areas, prioritising those with high biodiversity and ecosystem value, through a network of protected areas and conservation measures that are effective, representative, connected, and equitably managed," assured Deputy Minister Singh.

## Forestry Management

In her Budget Vote remarks and presentation to parliament, the Deputy Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, Ms Bernice Swarts said the Department, through the Forestry Branch, working in collaboration with its social partners



namely industry, labour, and other government departments, had continued the successful implementation of the five-year Forestry Masterplan. "The masterplan is essentially the transformation, growth and investment plan for the sector. Despite initial challenges, the sector has seen remarkable investment growth with R28 billion of the R30 billion target invested by the end of the 2023/24 financial year. This excludes investment by government on the different deliverables of the masterplan as part of providing a conducive environment for the sector to thrive," said Deputy Minister Swarts.

To date, 27 plantations covering 6,213 hectares have been transferred to communities through the Community Forestry Agreement Model. "To reduce temporary unplanted areas in state plantations, the department will be planting 1 800 hectares in Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal and in the Eastern Cape. In addition to this, 2 100 hectares will be tendered through different silvicultural regimes like weeding, pruning and thinning and eight community forestry agreements will be concluded in this financial year," said the Deputy Minister.

In terms of the new afforestation, approximately 47,000 hectares of land in KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape have been earmarked for new afforestation. The DFFE is in the process of finalising environmental impact assessments to facilitate the issuance of water use licenses for planting. "A significant legislative milestone includes the President's signing of the amended National Veld and Forest Fire Bill into law. This amendment facilitates the formation of fire protection associations, crucial for managing veld and forest fires effectively," said Deputy Minister Swarts.

The Department is implementing the National Greening Programme which aims to coordinate national, provincial and local government initiatives and those of civil society to plant, care and maintain trees and other vegetation in urban and rural settlement areas. The initiative is implemented through the Presidential initiative: Ten Million Trees Programme which aims to plant 2 million trees every year, over a period of five years.

The programme is currently in the fourth year of implementation having planted about 3 972 2800 trees which comprise of 60% fruit and 40% ornamentals. An estimated 1 177 390 trees were planted through DFFE initiatives and other stakeholders in the 2023/24 financial year. "This resulted in the creation of 4062 work opportunities

as it is implemented through the EPWP. The greening programme is aimed at creating sustainable settlements, aesthetically pleasing environment and mitigating against harmful effects of climate change while addressing household food security when trees are integrated into homestead gardens. For the 2024/25 financial year, the plan is to plant 150 000 trees through DFFE interventions and 2 million trees in collaboration with other stakeholders," said Deputy Minister Swarts.

## Environmental Programmes

Through a range of EPWP projects implemented by the Department, the DFFE exceeded its 2023/24 EPWP target of creating 42 302 work opportunities as the department created a total of 80 918 work opportunities. "The work opportunities created benefited 60% women and 58% youth, with 1% on persons with disabilities. Youth employment included the employment of graduates, enabling them to gain critical experience in line with section 24 of the Constitution. It is encouraging that some of these graduates were absorbed into the municipalities and other host organizations," said Deputy Minister Swarts.



**Above:** Through its Working on Fire Programme, the Department effectively contained wildland fires, preventing their escalation into natural disasters.

The Department aims to clear 295 000 hectares of land invaded by invasive alien plants and rehabilitate 23 wetlands. "We will maintain the Working on Fire Programme, by suppressing at least 90% of wildfires. The Working on Fire Programme remains a priority in the 2024/25 financial year, noting that experts have already warned of the increase in the frequency and intensity of fires due to climate change," said Deputy Minister Swarts.

# SA's drylands near tipping point

By Flora Mokgohloa

**M**ost of South Africa's landscape, amounting to 91%, is classified as drylands, rendering it highly vulnerable to desertification. This concerning statistic highlights the pressing need for land management strategies. Land degradation, stemming from mining activities, unsustainable land use practices, inadequate infrastructure development, and excessive exploitation of natural resources, worsens food and water insecurity throughout all nine provinces. Alongside the effects of droughts, these factors significantly contribute to migration and socio-economic instability in the country.

In response to these challenges, the Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment calls on all South Africans to join government's ongoing initiatives to prevent land degradation and promote sustainable land management practices. By protecting the environment through land restoration, we can make significant strides toward eradicating hunger and poverty.

June, designated as Environment Month, serves as a crucial platform to raise awareness about the importance of environmental conservation, protection, management, and the restoration of degraded landscapes. This month highlights pressing issues and underscores the need for immediate and sustained action.

Drought and Desertification Day (DDD), commemorated annually on June 17, marked the 30th anniversary of the United Nations Convention

to Combat Desertification in 2024. This year's theme, "United for Land: Our Legacy. Our Future," emphasised the critical role of land management in securing our future. The goal is to encourage the public and decision-makers to take action toward land restoration, drought resilience, and sustainable land management practices.

South Africa has shown its commitment to combating land degradation through the development and implementation of the National Action Programme (NAP). Additionally, the country is among 23 African nations participating in the African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative (AFR100) since 2015, pledging to restore 3.6 million hectares of deforested and degraded land by 2030. Our voluntary Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) targets under the UNCCD aim to restore, rehabilitate, and conserve 11 million hectares of degraded land and ecosystems by 2030.

Achieving LDN requires a paradigm shift in land stewardship, moving from "degrade-abandon-migrate" to "protect-sustain-restore." This shift necessitates cooperation across sectors, embracing complementary management options to minimize current land degradation, and rehabilitate and restore degraded lands and ecosystems. In rural areas, where people depend on scarce productive land resources, land restoration is crucial for the future of our country and its inhabitants.





Restoring land and related rehabilitation activities generate multiple benefits: job creation, improved livelihoods, and enhanced socio-economic conditions. Moreover, restoration increases resilience and adaptive capacity to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding, and other disasters. Addressing land degradation challenges demands concerted efforts in rehabilitation, restoration, and conservation of degraded landscapes, promoting sustainable land management practices on a large scale.

Various multi-sectoral programs support the UNCCD's objectives, linking biodiversity conservation with socio-economic development. Initiatives such as the LandCare program, Working for Water, Working for Land, Working for Wetlands, and Working on Fire contribute to green job creation, empower women and youth from marginalized communities, and effectively reduce poverty.

Engaging present and future generations is essential to halt and reverse alarming trends, meeting global commitments to restore 1 billion hectares of degraded land by 2030. There is a growing concern that drought is increasing in frequency, severity and intensity due to climate change. Drought is the most damaging of all natural disasters due to its slow onset and long-term socio-economic effects; which exacerbates food and water insecurity, increases poverty and hunger, famine, conflicts and migration.

While drought affects people from all nations, it has a disproportionate impact on vulnerable communities. The economic losses associated with drought are estimated to be in the billions of dollars annually. Responses to drought are often reactive and poorly coordinated leading to significant negative economic, social and environmental impacts.

Drought impacts can even make ecosystems collapse, contributing to climate change and biodiversity loss, diminish agricultural and other nature-based production and its systems, threaten food security, incomes and livelihoods, and even claim human lives. This in turn leads to the absorption of critical state funds which had been designated for other needs and uses.

There is, therefore, a need to strengthen institutional mechanisms for engaging government and relevant stakeholders in the dissemination

of scientific, practical, traditional, and local knowledge on drought preparedness, as well as identifying potential areas for action, constraints, and responses.

The upcoming 16<sup>th</sup> session of the Conference of Parties (COP16) to the UNCCD, scheduled to be held later this year in December 2024 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, will decide on the most appropriate approaches for drought management. The UNCCD is one of the three major treaties known as the Rio Conventions, alongside those addressing climate change and biodiversity. Addressing these issues sequentially—climate crisis today, biodiversity loss tomorrow, and land degradation the day after—is not effective. We must tackle all these challenges simultaneously, as healthy land is crucial to achieving global climate, nature, and sustainable development goals.

Drought is a complex phenomenon with a range of causes and impacts. These should not be considered in isolation. We need coordination, communication and cooperation, driven by sufficient finance and political will. This means at COP16, parties must commit to ambitious collective actions to accelerate the restoration of degraded land by 2030, enhance drought preparedness, response, and resilience, and ensure that land continues to provide climate and biodiversity solutions. Additionally, the commitments must promote the scaling up of nature-positive food production, strengthen women's land rights to advance land restoration, and promote youth engagement by creating decent land-based jobs for young people.

Drought is daunting, as its effects on people's lives are devastating. But through different initiatives, commitments and unity, it can be successfully addressed. It can motivate action towards much-needed sustainable practices in land and water management, enabling us not only to survive, but to thrive.

The vision for the future is clear: sustainable land management that demands immediate and sustained action. Our future depends on the health of our land, and it is our collective responsibility to nurture and sustain it. The time to act is now. By doing so, we can secure a brighter, more sustainable future for all.



### **About the contributor: Flora Mokgohloa**

Flora Mokgohloa is the Deputy Director-General: Biodiversity & Conservation at the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment.



# #TEMPERATUREMATTERS ABSOLUTELY



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# Sausage fruit to the world

By Erica Mathye



**Above:** The owner of Dinda Technologies, Mr Patrick Mtebule holds up the sausage fruit which has made him become a businessman. The enterprising businessman took the opportunity to introduce high-ranking political leaders to his business.

**P**atrick Mtebule is an emerging entrepreneur in bioprospecting from Burgersdorp near Tzaneen in Limpopo. The founder of Dinda Technologies has found a niche market in producing health and lifestyle products from a fruit that grows in his backyard.

The *Kigelia Africana* or sausage fruit is a gigantic fruit that grows in most parts of South Africa. Commonly referred to as Dinda or Mpfunguri in the XiTsonga language, the sausage fruit has been used traditionally for many years to treat a variety of skin conditions, promote wound healing and make traditional beer.

Weighing around 7kg, the sausage fruit, due to its shape has been hailed in some communities as a symbol of fertility and believed to enhance sexual performance.

Adding to its many uses, Mtebule processes the Dinda to produce natural-resource products including body washes, dishwashes and feminine intimate washes which he says can restore a woman's PH balance.

"My cleansers are not harsh on women. My clients are satisfied with my products. I appreciate their feedback a lot because it shows my products are working," said Mtebule.

## A BIG INFORMAL SECTOR

The charismatic owner of Dinda Technologies is part of an informal bioprospecting sector value chain in South Africa which is estimated to be extremely large and can be found in all provinces of the country.

A number of research studies have been conducted on the informal trade of biological resources in South Africa. According to a study of the Economics of the Traditional Medicine Trade in South Africa by Mander et al. (undated):

The traditional medicines market in South Africa is estimated to be worth R2.9 billion per year; representing 5.6% of the National Health Budget. There are also 27 million consumers of traditional medicines. Dinda is processed from 'raw material' up to the point where the resulting product is ready to be sold to consumers.



## ATTRACTING INTERNATIONAL CLIENTS

Mtebule says growing up in the rural areas made him curious about wanting to understand the bioprospecting value chain.

"I am fascinated by indigenous plants and their benefits. Most of our rural African communities have similar indigenous plants growing in our backyards that can be processed for business." At the moment, Mtebule says he is working with other SMMEs to facilitate market access and exposure.

"We don't produce in bulk and so our products don't receive favourable exposure on commercial markets. We need sponsors and investors who see value in bioprospecting," says Mtebule.

"With the world moving away from sulphates and other harmful chemicals, the demand is higher for natural-resource products.

"Just like our Moringa, Marula and buchu trees that took the world by storm, I want my Dinda products to go global. I have customers from as far Germany."

Mtebule says the aim is not to gatekeep but expose his knowledge and expertise to young people.

"I am inviting interns who want to learn from me about start up a small manufacturing factories," he said.

## A GROWING FASCINATION

Mtebule says growing up in rural Limpopo attracted him to indigenous plants as his parents and grandparents always used them to treat ailments.

"Back then, people also used to be healthier, stronger and lived longer because the food was organic.

"I'm someone who is interested in indigenous knowledge and wanting to know everything about how our parents survived in the olden days," he said.

Patrick admits the moment he knew about the term bioprospecting, he started Dinda Technologies in 2016, harvesting the fruit from a small farm in Burgersdorp and sending them for processing in Centurion.

Mtebule has also recently entered the beverage market and says his gin is a hit as it is all with no

preservatives and does not cause *babalaas* (hangover).

As one of the exhibitors at the recent Biodiversity Economy Indaba held in Birchwood, Gauteng, Mtebule's products received massive attention from local media houses.

He told president Cyril Ramaphosa about his plans to expand his international client-base.

"Dinda is available in many African countries. Europeans are interested in natural African products.

"Big corporates are reluctant to invest in natural products because they claim they are expensive to manufacture."

## CONCERNS FROM THE SECTOR

During the recent Biodiversity Economy Indaba, informal traders in bioprospecting raised some of their concerns:

- Traditional knowledge is contained and owned at local level but does not benefit locals.
- Lack of solid investors or land in the bioprospecting.
- Investing into nature is perceived as a cost.
- No database on available bioprospecting products and where to find them.
- No tangible beneficiation for the people taking care of Indigenous plants.
- The need to protect our natural resources is engraved in many of us but we know so little of the value-chains of our ecosystems.
- Lack of capital from communities with bioprospecting assets.
- The need to pull people out of poverty and create a strong rural economy.
- Innovative solutions and market access for communities to be able to start businesses and have a strong negotiating arm by knowing the value of the products.
- People in rural areas own bioprospecting resources but do not own the factories or equipment necessary for large scale production.
- The need to close the funding gap where the funding gap is greater than the funding need.
- Communication problems.



### About the contributor: Erica Mathye

Ms Erica Mathye is the Deputy Director: Editorial Services in the Chief Directorate: Communications at the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment. Prior to joining the Department, she worked as a reporter and Chief Copy Editor for a number of magazines.



# JUNE IS ENVIRONMENT MONTH

#goodgreendeeds  
#GenerationRestoration  
#UNited4Land  
#awakennewdepths



World Environment  
Day - 05 June

World Oceans Day  
08 June

Desertification and  
Drought Day 17 June



**WORLD  
ENVIRONMENT  
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# Celebrating Environment Month

By Paul Sigutya

Every year in June, the world celebrates Environment Month by doing actions that protect the environment from clearing litter in the neighbourhoods to recycling and reusing household products.

This year, World Oceans Day (WOD) on 8 June was celebrated at Mossel Bay's Dias Museum Educational Centre with learners from Thembelitsha Primary School and the Greyling Enviro Club who explored interactive marine science exhibits, inspired by the WOD 2024 theme 'Awaken New Depths' to foster a love for ocean conservation. The DFFE also partnered with WESSA, Coca-Cola, and The Waste Trade Company in cleaning up First Beach in Gqeberha as part of their Environment Month activities.

In Motherwell, during Environment Month, locals and partners like Giving Them Wings Foundation and Pick 'n Pay planted 30 indigenous trees and cleaned up illegal dumping sites in Ward 58 and 59. Door-to-door campaigns led by the DFFE and Cleaning Greening beneficiaries raised environmental awareness.

Closing-off Environment Month, DFFE showcased the latest initiatives in marine science and conservation through an interactive exhibition at the Wildfees 2024, in Kirkwood, Eastern Cape. Visitors explored our efforts in marine conservation and joined us in celebrating Environment Month.



## About the contributor: Paul Sigutya

Paul Sigutya is an Assistant Director of Internal and External Communication in the Directorate Communication Services CPT in the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment.



# Protecting the future of black and white rhino



**Above:** The Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment engaged stakeholders from the KwaZulu-Natal province on the revision of the black and white rhino biodiversity management plan in June 2024. The engagement sessions were aimed at providing updates to stakeholders on the progress of the biodiversity management plan following its publication in the Government Gazette by former Minister, Ms Barbara Creecy. The Black and White Rhino Biodiversity Management Plan aims to provide a strategic approach and detailed action plan to conserve rhino in South Africa and for engaging with the relevant range states. **By Tshegofatso Ndhlovu.**

# Mpumalanga carves path for climate adaptation



**Above:** Traditional leaders, indigenous health practitioners and other indigenous knowledge practitioners were all in attendance at the Indigenous and Local Climate Change Adaptation Response Workshop hosted by the Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and Environment, in collaboration with the Mpumalanga Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs and the South African Weather Service in Ehlanzeni District Municipality from 20 to 21 June 2024. This workshop was aimed at conceptualising, developing, and investigating ways to incorporate indigenous knowledge system approaches into climate change adaptation responses and monitoring and evaluation systems in Mpumalanga as well as addressing the barriers that have limited Indigenous people and local communities' participation and involvement in the formulation of climate change policies and strategies. **By Dimpho Matlanato.**

# Advocacy for gender equality in climate actions



**Above:** Gender mainstreaming in the fight against climate change was the topic of the day at the Draft National Climate Change Gender Action Plan (GAP) workshop in Cape Town hosted by the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment together with The Western Cape Government on 21 June 2024. The workshop saw stakeholders from different industries coming together to provide inputs and raise awareness on gender mainstreaming in climate change actions and sharing information on South Africa's progress in assessing the implications of planned action for both women and men. Gender mainstreaming ensures that the concerns and experiences of both women and men are given equal value and consideration in all aspects of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes involving climate action. **By Tshegofatso Ndhlovu.**



# The purpose of EPR Regulations in South Africa



**Transforming Waste into Value:** The 2021 Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) regulations revolutionize South Africa's waste management, making EPR mandatory for producers and importers of packaging, paper, electronics, and lighting materials. This transformative approach ensures products remain in the recycling loop, fostering sustainable practices and reshaping industry standards.



**Circular Economy in Action - A Paradigm Shift in Waste Management:** Effective from May 5, 2021, South Africa's EPR regulations compel producers, brand owners, retailers, and importers to rethink product lifecycle management. This legislative shift prioritizes sustainable design and recycling, making waste management a collective responsibility and promoting a greener, more circular economy.



**Empowering Waste Pickers - Key Players in the Recycling Value Chain:** With EPR now mandatory, South Africa recognizes and promotes the crucial role of waste pickers, by mandating service fees for waste pickers involved in collection and recycling, turning waste management into a more inclusive and sustainable industry.



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# Don't Litter, Throw It In The Bin!

By Veronica Mahlaba

**D**on't Litter, Throw it in the Bin - was the slogan chanted by the DFFE Team on the streets during the Radio 702 Let's Walk The Talk from Freedom Park to the Union Buildings on 28 July 2024. The team was powerfully led by the Director-General, Ms Nomfundo Tshabalala and Deputy Director-General: Chemicals & Waste Management, Ms Mamogala Musekene, carrying placards and banners with different waste

management messages to create Good Green Deeds awareness.

This year, the Department has partnered with Primedia's 702 Walk the Talk initiative to encourage South Africans to keep our communities litter-free. Together we can beat the war on waste if we Act Now!



**Above:** Outside the DFFE marquee, the team that went on the 8KM walk led by the Director-General, Ms Nomfundo Tshabalala and Deputy Director-General: Chemicals and Waste Management, Ms Mamogala Musekene showing off their medals.



**Above:** DFFE's Spokesperson, Mr Peter Mbelengwa went on air on 702 to heighten awareness on the Good Green Deeds initiative where he called on every South Africans to keep their neighbourhoods clean.





**Above:** On the City of Tshwane streets, the DFFE Team shouting: "Don't Litter, Thow It In The Bin" to encourage people to always keep the environment clean.



**Above:** Other team members joined the 6.7KM walk with our famous and most liked mascot Billy Bin to further spread the message of Good Green Deeds.



**Above:** Families and friends joined in as part of the 702 Let's Walk The Talk initiative and made sure that every one with an ear heard the Departments call to stop plastic pollution and illegal dumping.



**Above:** Don't Litter, Throw It In The Bin that was the message of the day.



### **About the contributor: Veronica Mahlaba**

Ms Veronica Mahlaba is a Senior Communication Officer in the Chief Directorate: Communications at the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment.



# DFFE celebrates Mandela Day

By Paul Sigutya



**Above:** In Mossel Bay, in partnership with the Department of Correctional Services, the DFFE participated in cleaning up the Tembalethu community.

**W**I dream of our vast deserts, of our forests, of all our great wildernesses. We must never forget that it is our duty to protect this environment."

These words from the late international icon Nelson Mandela resonate profoundly as we reflect on his enduring legacy. Mandela believed in the intrinsic connection between the environment and the well-being of future generations, emphasising that safeguarding natural resources is not merely a responsibility but a moral obligation.

On July 18, 2024, the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) honoured International Nelson Mandela Day with a series of impactful initiatives in Gqeberha and Mossel Bay. This year's theme, "It's still in our hands to combat poverty and inequity," guided activities focused on sustainable community development, environmental education, and fostering active citizenry.

In the heart of Motherwell, the DFFE, in collaboration with the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality, Coega Development Corporation, and the Department of Agriculture, planted indigenous trees and handed over garden tools and school shoes to the needy learners of Vulumzi Senior Secondary School. The Department of Agriculture, with assistance from the Cleaning and Greening participants, established a food garden at the school. This initiative not only beautified the surroundings but also instilled a sense of environmental stewardship among the agricultural learners that will maintain the garden.

Meanwhile, in Mossel Bay, the DFFE partnered with the Department of Correctional Services to

clean up the Tembalethu community. Volunteers, including inmates on parole, came together to make a tangible difference, reflecting the spirit of unity and rehabilitation.

The Mandela Day activities extended into July 19, 2024, at KwaZakhele High School, where the DFFE hosted an environmental awareness programme. Recycling bins and school shoes were provided for the needy learners, reinforcing the importance of sustainability and education. As Mandela famously stated, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." This sentiment echoes the DFFE's mission to empower communities through knowledge and resources.

These initiatives honour Mandela's legacy by empowering communities to take ownership of their environment and contribute to sustainable development. The DFFE's efforts remind us that "It is still in our hands" to create a better future for ourselves and generations to come.



**Above:** In Mossel Bay, in partnership with the Department of Correctional Services, the DFFE participated in cleaning up the Tembalethu community.



# Deputy Minister Singh addresses mercury conference

By Paul Sigutya



**Above:** Deputy Minister Singh addressing delegates of the 16<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Mercury as a Global Pollutant.

South Africa's Deputy Minister of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment (DFFE), Mr. Narend Singh, addressed the 16<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Mercury as a Global Pollutant, emphasising the nation's critical role in managing mercury emissions. This conference, notable for being the first held on African soil, took place at the International Convention Centre in Cape Town, 21 – 26 July 2024.

Singh underscored South Africa's responsibility as the continent's most industrialised country, stating, "South Africa, as the most industrialised country in Africa, has a significant responsibility in managing our environmental impact." He referenced Section 24 of the Bill of Rights, which guarantees the right to a protected environment for current and future generations, as a guiding principle for the country's environmental policies.

The Deputy Minister highlighted the international scrutiny surrounding South Africa's mercury emissions, primarily due to its reliance on coal for energy. He noted that the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) identified South Africa as a major mercury emitter during the Minamata Convention negotiations. "The Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment leads and coordinates our efforts in managing mercury in an environmentally sound manner," Singh affirmed.

Key initiatives outlined by Singh include the UNEP Level 1 Inventory Toolkit conducted in 2011 and the signing of the Minamata Convention in 2023, which he described as a demonstration of the country's commitment to the Convention's goals. He remarked, "This demonstrates our commitment to the Convention's objectives."

The National Implementation Plan (NIP) on mercury, approved by the Cabinet in 2023, delineates responsibilities among stakeholders and facilitates the implementation of the Minamata Convention. Singh stated, "Draft Regulations on Mercury, which have been published for stakeholder consultations, will soon be tabled in parliament, banning mercury mining and controlling mercury-containing products."

Addressing health concerns, Singh announced that a study on the impact of mercury on public health is nearing completion, following stakeholder workshops. He also revealed that the Department has secured funding to develop a National Action Plan on Artisanal Small Scale Gold Mining (ASGM), a significant source of mercury emissions. "ASGM is the second biggest source of mercury emissions in the country," Singh noted.

In the healthcare sector, significant progress has been made, including a 67.7% reduction in dental amalgam use and a substantial decrease in mercury-containing thermometers. Singh added, "The private medical sector has fully transitioned to mercury-free alternatives."

To prepare for upcoming mercury regulations, the DFFE has trained officials to detect mercury in imported products, equipping them with X-Ray Fluorescence (XRF) handheld scanners. "We have equipped officials at our ports of entry with X-Ray Fluorescence (XRF) handheld scanners," Singh stated, ensuring effective regulation enforcement.

In conclusion, Singh expressed South Africa's commitment to environmental protection and reducing human exposure to mercury. "Together with our partners, South Africa is committed to protecting the environment and reducing human exposure to mercury," he concluded, highlighting the importance of the conference discussions and outcomes.

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