

# Environment Quarterly

Kwartaalike Omgewingsverslag

Tikologo ka Kotara

Mupo nga Kotara



**Advancing towards a greener  
South Africa**  
Choose a career in forestry



forestry, fisheries  
& the environment

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



# Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment

# 2023

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### ENVIRONMENTAL DAYS

02 February	World Wetlands Day	08 June	World Oceans Day
03 March	World Wildlife Day	17 June	Desertification and Drought Day
21 March	International Day of Forests	31 July	World Ranger Day
23 March	World Meteorological Day	September	National Arbor Month
22 April	Earth Day	16 September	Ozone Day
14 May	World Migratory Bird Day	19 September	International Coastal Clean-up Day
22 May	International Day for Biological Diversity	September	South African National Parks Week
05 June	World Environment Day	21 November	World Fisheries Day

### PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

1 Jan	Sun	New Year's Day	16 Jun	Fri	Youth Day
2 Jan	Mon	New Year Holiday	9 Aug	Wed	National Women's Day
21 Mar	Tue	Human Rights Day	24 Sep	Sun	Heritage Day
7 Apr	Fri	Good Friday	25 Sep	Mon	Heritage Day Holiday
10 Apr	Mon	Family Day	16 Dec	Sat	Day of Reconciliation
27 Apr	Thu	Freedom Day	25 Dec	Mon	Christmas Day
1 May	Mon	Workers' Day	26 Dec	Tue	Day of Goodwill

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# Content

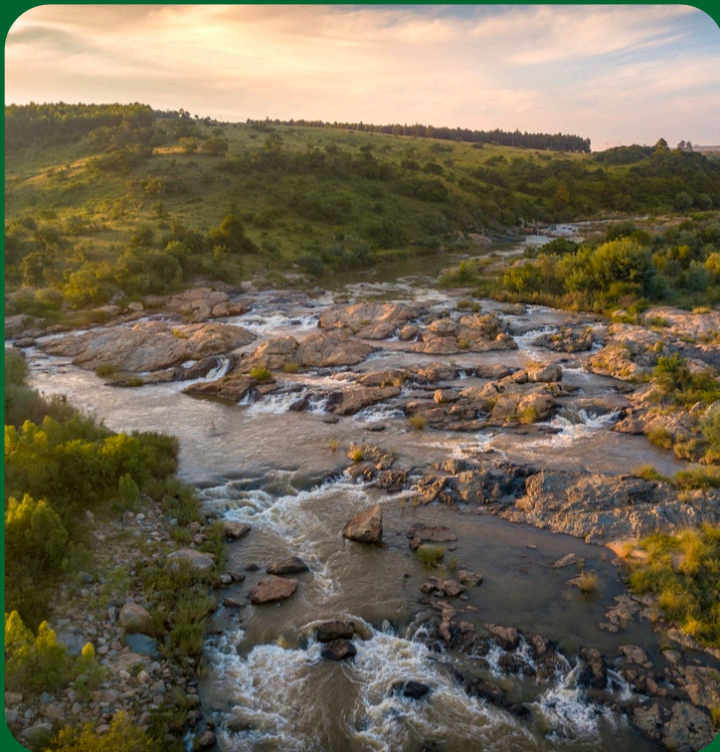
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### About the back cover image:

The Elandsberg Nature Area, KwaZulu-Natal

The protected environment area in KwaZulu-Natal is located between the towns of Paulpietersburg and Utrecht, in the districts of Amajuba and Zululand. The Elandsberg Nature Area covers an area of 25 000 hectares. Through this designation, the South African government aims to enhance the preservation of the primary catchments of Thukela and Phongolo, two of the important river systems in Elandsberg.



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# Editorial: Focus on Forests



## Dear Valued Stakeholder,

It is my absolute pleasure and privilege to welcome you to this special edition of the Environment Quarterly. The team and I are particularly excited and proud that you are reading this magazine with us because we have put it together to focus on the forestry sector, particularly looking into the health of our forests in South Africa and the many individual and economic benefits derived from them.

Leaning on events from this year's Arbor Month which was themed 'Forests and Health' and led throughout the country by Deputy Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, Ms Makhotso Soty, and her team of experts from the forestry and related branches, we realise that there is a definite need for specialised focus in our families and communities to raise education and awareness around the planting of trees. Read more on Pages 4 – 5.

When Polokwane won greenest city in this year's National Arbor City Awards, which was hosted by the Department and partners, the honours went to the city's efforts in involving children and youth in greening programmes. Arbor Month teaches us the importance of trees in our society as a constant supply of oxygen, shade, food, firewood, medicine, furniture and jobs, to mention just a few.

The forestry sector as an employer contributes about 150 000 jobs across the country which goes some way in alleviating unemployment while caring for our environment. One of the ways in which the department contributes to poverty alleviation in the sector is through the Eco-furniture programme which manufactures furniture from the wood of alien invasive plants.

Young people in the eco-furniture programme receive training and skills transfer in fields that have a good absorption rate into the private and public sectors. However, experience

has shown that employees remain with the factories as there are opportunities for progression within the factories themselves and into administrative and managerial functions. Read more on Page 11.

It is also important for us to remember the strong relations that exist between forests and climate change. In recent years we've seen the devastating effects of deforestation and veld fires on our environment. Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment Barbara Creecy travelled to Dubai for the COP28 Climate Conference from 30 November to 12 December 2023. The two-week programme was geared towards real world climate solutions that close the gaps to 2030. The resounding message for all of us is clear: The time to act against climate change is now.

The team and I hope you enjoy this read.

'Till next time!

Editor

*Erica*

## Meet our team

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# TREES OF THE YEAR 2023

By Dimpho Matlanato



## Buddleja saligna

Common Name: False Olive (English), Witolienhout (Afrikaans), Mothlwaretshogwana (Setswana), Igqeba (IsiZulu)

A very hardy, evergreen and drought resistant shrub or small tree, growing up to 15m. It has silver-grey leaves and beautiful twisted bark that looks almost woven. It bears profuse panicles of sweetly scented white flowers from August to January that attract insects and birds.

Distribution and Habitat:

- The trees can mostly be found growing in the warmer parts of the country. They have a wide distribution in KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Gauteng, Free State, Western and Eastern Cape, even reaching Zimbabwe and Swaziland.

Uses:

- The false olive can be used for traditional medicine purposes; leaves to treat colds and coughs, and roots used to induce vomiting and act as a purgative.
- It is also used to make small pieces of furniture and fence posts as well as assegai handles.



## Bolusanthus speciosus

Common Name: Tree Wisteria (English), Vanwykshout (Afrikaans), Motsokophala (Setswana), umHolo (IsiZulu)

*Bolusanthus speciosus* is an upright, slender, small to medium sized tree that grows to a height of between 5 and 7 m with a spread of 5 to 6 m. It is an attractive deciduous tree, mimicking the splendour of the jacaranda, which is stunning in spring.

Distribution and Habitat:

- It is widespread in the wooded grasslands of Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Swaziland and KwaZulu-Natal.

Uses:

- The roots are used medicinally to alleviate stomach problems and the inner bark is used to treat abdominal cramps.
- The wood makes excellent furniture. It works well on a lathe, turning out beautiful lampshades and other items.

# Deputy Minister Sotyú advances towards 1 million trees

By Veronica Mahlaba and Erica Mathye



**Above:** Deputy Minister Sotyú planted trees in the yard of many houses in Boitumelong Township as part of the One Million Trees launch in Bloemhof, North West.



**Above:** Deputy Minister Sotyú handed over the keys of the sewer jet truck to the Executive Mayor of Dr RSM District Municipality, Cllr. Motseokae and he passed the keys on to Mayor of Lekwa-Teemane Local Municipality, Cllr. Sebang Motlhabi.

To close off Arbor Month, Deputy Minister Makhotsó Sotyú, joined by the Executive Mayor of Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompoti (Dr RSM) District Municipality, Cllr. Motseokae and Mayor of Lekwa-Teemane Local Municipality, Cllr. Sebang Motlhabi launched the Dr RSM District Development Model (DDM) One Million Trees Campaign by planting trees on 06 October 2023 in Bloemhof, North West.

The One Million Trees Campaign will be implemented across the District under the guidance of the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, which is the custodian of the 10 Million Trees Programme. This will support the cleaning and greening programme in the District.

The Deputy Minister said it was vital for all communities across the country to have trees. "I am on a mission to ensure that we work together on issues of environment conservation and development which involves greening, tree-planting and protection of our green heritage. Trees are useful in our daily lives. They provide us with shade, food and assist in reducing extreme weather conditions."

A Good Green Deeds mass clean-up was conducted in Boitumelong Township with 620 Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) participants from across Dr RSM District Municipality. The Deputy Minister also handed over a sewer jet truck to Lekwa-Teemane Local



**Above:** The EPWP participants did a clean-up in Boitumelong Township to encourage the community to keep their surroundings clean.

Municipality. Mayor Motlhabi appreciated the truck and said it will make their work easier. "In the past, there were delays in unblocking sewage drains as we didn't have these trucks in the municipality. Now our communities can enjoy faster service delivery with this new truck," he said.

Arbor Month was celebrated under the theme: **Forests and Health** as adopted by the United Nations Collaborative Partnerships on Forests. The theme aims to highlight how forestry and tree-planting play key roles in creating sustainable, healthy communities through health benefits derived in forests through nutritious foods, medicine, fresh air, clean water and places for recreation.



## 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.

## Polokwane celebrates Arbor Month

The Deputy Minister, Ms Makhotso Sotyú also visited Polokwane City on 1 September to officially launch Arbor Month. The Deputy Minister spent time visiting key green projects in Polokwane and educating communities and raising awareness around the value in keeping our neighbourhoods clean. Her sentiments were also shared by the Executive Mayor of Polokwane Cllr. John Mpe whose work in advancing local schools is highly recognised by communities.

In Extension 78 in Seshego, Polokwane, the Deputy Minister was joined by local Councillors as she visited the homes of local residents and planted trees in their backyards. Residents said because their area is quite sedimentary with plenty of rocks on the surface, it was important to educate young children about the value of planting trees. Welheminah Phaka from Extension 78 said tree-planting has benefits including food, wood, job creation and furniture.

"I am very happy to welcome the Deputy Minister into my home during Arbor Month and for her to plant a tree in my backyard is an even bigger blessing and indication for us to keep spreading the message of Good Green Deeds in our communities", she said.

Later that evening, the Deputy Minister joined by the Executive Mayor, hosted the prestigious annual National Arbor City Awards which recognises and provides incentives to those Municipalities that go an extra mile to green their areas of jurisdiction. More than 50 municipalities participated in this year's competition with Polokwane City winning the overall first prize of R400 000.

"Thank you to the DFFE for this recognition. The municipality has worked hard in motivating cleaning and greening among our people. We have refurbished abandoned parks in the city and continue to work with local schools on greening programmes," said the Executive Mayor.



**Above:** Deputy Minister Sotyú with winners of the 2023 National Arbor City Awards. The Executive Mayor Cllr. John Mpe received the prize on stage.



**Above:** DFFE officials attend the Arbor City Awards.



**Above:** Senior Managers from the DFFE made a glitzy entrance at National Arbor City Awards.



**Above:** Mammoka Secondary School wins 1st Runner-up at the National Arbor City Awards ceremony hosted in Polokwane.

# SA's carbon sink marvels

By Zibuse Ndlovu



**Above:** From the Satico Plantations, near Louw's Creek, in Mpumalanga Province, the Eucalyptus Grandis trees stand as the tallest trees in the country, at 72.3 m.

The sun's rays filter through the dense canopy, as if offering a silent cheer to the towering Eucalyptus Grandis champion trees for persistently performing their vital task, that of absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

It is these magnificent trees that stand sentinel in the fight for the planet's future, effortlessly supporting a delicate ecosystem that works tirelessly to balance the atmosphere's carbon dioxide. Their lush foliage, bathed in golden sunlight, captures the greenhouse gas during the process of photosynthesis, transforming it into life-sustaining oxygen and storing carbon within their very fibres.

One of the most remarkable qualities of Eucalyptus Grandis trees is their rapid growth rate, which enables them to sequester carbon dioxide at an astonishing pace. These trees possess an insatiable appetite for carbon, drawing it in through their leaves and transporting it down to their extensive root systems. As they grow, they lock away significant amounts of carbon within their trunks, branches, and roots, acting as formidable carbon sinks that help to mitigate the effects of climate change.

"Eucalyptus trees have significant contribution in carbon sequestration potential. It is an important short rotation tree species that fixes the atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> into biomass and sequester carbon at a faster rate as compared to other short rotation forestry species," says Ms Sewela

Malaka, the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE's) Control Environment Officer: Greenhouse Gas Inventory and Systems.

Ms Malaka believes that carbon sequestration through sink enhancement by way of integration of Eucalyptus trees into landscapes is one of the most cost effective mitigation strategies. "Carbon sequestration mitigates CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the long term and in this way contributes to reducing the effects of climate change. Intensively managed forest plantations grow faster and simultaneously produce more biomass than many natural forests. Due to this fast growth rate, a plantation has better potential for carbon sequestration than a native forest. Eucalyptus wood products have a potential role in the mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions, either acting as carbon pools and sinks or by substituting more energy intensive construction materials and fossil fuels," says Ms Malaka.

With an increasing concern for global climate changes resulting from more and more anthropogenic greenhouse gas, protecting carbon stocks in the existing forests and getting the new carbon stocks through afforestation and reforestation of Eucalyptus trees have become the important measures to enhance the carbon sequestration capacity in the terrestrial ecosystems and mitigate the increasing carbon dioxide concentration in the atmosphere.



## About the contributor: Zibuse Ndlovu

Zibuse Ndlovu is the Assistant Director in the Communications and Advocacy Chief Directorate at the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment.





**Above:** The DFFE planted 8 trees to celebrate International Day for Clean Air and Blue Skies at New Look Primary School in Seshego under Polokwane Municipality, Limpopo. Image by Veronica Mahlaba.

Beyond their role as carbon sinks, Eucalyptus Grandis trees provide a sustainable source of timber, further contributing to carbon storage. The harvested wood from these trees can be utilised in construction, furniture production, and paper manufacturing, effectively storing carbon for extended periods. "By incorporating Eucalyptus Grandis timber into various industries, South Africa not only benefits from a renewable resource but also ensures that carbon remains locked away, reducing the carbon footprint of these sectors," says Ms Malaka. According to the State of the Forests Report: (2018) South Africa: "Restoration of the 350 million hectares of degraded land as per the Paris Agreement has the potential to sequester up to 1.7 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent, annually."

However, the rise of carbon emissions from human activity has led to a dangerous increase in global temperatures, resulting in more frequent, intense, and severe weather events. As extreme weather conditions become the norm, forests face the devastating consequences of wildfires, droughts, and heatwaves. These events make it increasingly difficult for forests to function as carbon sinks, fuelling the cycle of destruction that threatens their existence.

The DFFE's Ms Nosipho Ndzimbomvu, of Forestry Livelihoods, sheds light on the potential of forests. She states that one hectare of forest, growing at a rate of producing 10m<sup>3</sup> of wood per year, will remove carbon dioxide equivalent to 14 million m<sup>3</sup> of air. "One can visualise this as a column of air 1.4km deep over an area of forest the size of two soccer fields. Do keep in mind that trees do not all grow equally fast, and all forests are not equally productive as carbon sinks. Trees in urban environments and commercial forestry plantations are generally quite fast growing and are therefore active carbon sinks," says Ms Ndzimbomvu.

## Ten Million Trees Programme

Moreover, the DFFE's Forestry Management Branch has been given a mandate to lead the implementation of the Ten Million Trees initiative. "The Ten Million Trees initiative is a directive from the Presidency of the Republic of South Africa for DFFE to coordinate the planting of ten million trees over a period of five years. The initiative is in its 3rd year. Tree planting activities take place in and



**Above:** As part of the Ten Million Trees Programme, trees were planted by Deputy Minister Makhotso Sotyu at Qibing Senior Secondary School in Wepener, Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality to commemorate Nelson Mandela Day. Image by Veronica Mahlaba.

around the country at various municipal areas with the guidance of DFFE officials. Most of the activities follow a scheduled pattern in line with the DFFE regional plans," says Ms Ndzimbomvu.

The Forestry Management Branch has developed a national clarion call on the Ten Million Trees initiative. "The call targets various organisations and community groups including education institutions, private corporations, non-government organisations and individual South Africans to actively participate in the project by planting trees for a course that is important to them," says Ms Ndzimbomvu.

## School Greening Project

Through its Forestry Management Branch, the Department aspires to build environmental sustainability and resilience for all the country's settlement areas through development and management of green and open spaces in urban, peri-urban and rural areas in order to mitigate environmental degradation, climate change and to promote quality of life. "As a result, the Forestry Management Branch has identified areas of expansion of its current National Greening Programme to existing and emerging parameters that include human settlements, air quality and school greening, in particular looking at the introduction of greening and tree planting in to the lower level school curriculum," says Ms Ndzimbomvu.

South Africa's Eucalyptus Grandis forests are not only carbon guardians but also sanctuaries for biodiversity. These vibrant ecosystems provide habitat for a diverse array of flora and fauna, fostering a delicate balance between nature and humanity. From the melodious songs of birds to the scurrying of small mammals, these forests teem with life, showcasing the interconnectedness between carbon sequestration and the preservation of biodiversity.

Perhaps, as we navigate the challenges of a warming world, it is crucial to recognize and appreciate the vital role these majestic trees play. By nurturing and preserving South Africa's Eucalyptus Grandis forests, we can forge a sustainable path forward, where these nature's carbon guardians continue to thrive, ensuring a brighter future for generations to come.

# Choose a career in forestry

By Veronica Mahlaba



With over 30 years experience in the field of forestry, EQ speaks to Mr Johan Bester about his chosen field and career path...

**Above:** One of the tools Mr Bester uses when on field work is the Caliper, used to measure tree diameters.

## 1. What qualifications do you have and from where?

I did a Master's Degree in Forestry in the United Kingdom. However, I started with a B.Sc. in Forestry from Stellenbosch University with focus areas in Forest Science and Conservation Science. I also obtained an Honours Degree in Agrarian Extension from the University of Pretoria.

## 2. What does your job entail?

Currently, I'm a Deputy Director in Forestry Scientific Services within the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment. The unit provides technical and scientific information support to other forestry functions and units like climate change, biodiversity, and desertification. We also interface with other national and provincial departments. Mainly, we focus on innovation, sustainable forest management, scientific advice and technical support. Over the past 10 years, there has been strong demand for technical support on the regulatory aspect of forestry, which involves environmental impact management and court proceedings for prosecutions. As a middle manager I have administrative duties that relate to budget and personnel management as well.

## 3. How long have you been doing this job?

I have been in forestry for over 30 years. I started in Mpumalanga as an Assistant Manager for Commercial Forestry. There I developed an interest in forestry extension, for which the Honours Degree in Agrarian Extension was a prerequisite. My work then involved interfacing with the public when they needed advice on all kinds of aspects around tree planting, utilisation and conservation. Forestry extension evolved to what later was called community forestry. My job gradually changed to centre on fuel wood production, establishing nurseries, Arbor Day and fire regulations in Mpumalanga Province. I have done various things over the years.

## 4. What inspired you to follow this career path?

I started planting trees when I was eight years old. When I was in primary and secondary school, I spent holidays on a farm with trees and a little bit of forest. It provided for memorable adventurous experiences amongst the trees. I think somehow my career guidance teacher at secondary school saw my interest and advised me to enroll for the B.Sc. Forestry at Stellenbosch University. I didn't even know then that one could study forestry after school.

## 5. Which subjects must you do in high school?

Mathematics, Biology, Physical Science and Chemistry. Learners need to pay attention to their school work as early as possible in these subjects. Other useful subjects include Geography, Accounting and Economics.

## 6. Describe a day in your life?

There is plenty of variation in my current job. When in office, I mostly focus on specific projects where I do literature research, extract and analyse technical information. Our team develops research and forest monitoring projects, and we respond to different enquiries from different sections. We produce plenty of written work and often do presentations. Out of office our team conducts a variety of field work, which mostly involve systematic observations and measurements in the forests, tree identification and evaluations. There is a lot of travelling involved across the country.

## 7. What do you find most challenging and what most motivates you to do what you do?

Working within restrictive administrative systems can be challenging. There are a lot of processes you need to go through to accomplish some objectives. On the other hand, Forestry is an interesting subject. When you find technical barriers that you didn't know much about, it stimulates you to find solutions. I care about what happens in the real world and want to make sure that our forests and their wildlife are sustained. It's also about the benefits that people get from forests and enhancing those benefits for society.

## 8. What advice would you give to the youth who are interested in forestry?

Have a bit of a career focus early on in high school. Don't settle for easy subjects. Have determination and don't be swayed by trivial things. Take an interest in nature and experience the outdoor world. Interact with nature. Try to set up contacts with people in the occupational area to learn from them. Selecting a reputable tertiary institution where you are going to study is important. It's good to have a balanced life as a student, but make sure you lay solid academic foundations. Forestry offers an evolving career with prospects all over the world.

## 9. Where do you see yourself in the next 5-10 years?

I see myself in retirement, maybe within a year or so. After retirement I probably will find something to do with trees and forests again. My environmental interests are wide, so there could be other conservation related pursuits as well.



**Above:** Mr Bester with the Vertex Laser VL402 which allows you to measure, map, process and store forest and field data.



### **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.

# Choose a career in furniture manufacturing

By Veronica Mahlaba



**Above:** Eco-Furniture Programme participants with Acting Mill Manager Armstrong Masalisa undergoing herbicide training at the Ga-Rankuwa factory.

**A**s a young person, it can be a hard task to make the right career choice that will fulfill and sustain your life. In this EQ, we look at the role of the Ga-Rankuwa Eco-Furniture Programme in transferring skills to young people who intend to start businesses or become strong prospects for employment in furniture manufacturing. To unpack this, we speak to Acting Mill Manager at the Ga-Rankuwa factory, Mr Armstrong Masalisa.

## What is an eco-furniture factory?

We are a factory in the business of manufacturing furniture from the wood of alien invasive species. We produce cabinets, office desks, principal and teachers' desks as well as coffins for funeral parlours. The manufacturing process starts from harvesting trees, planking and de-planking, wet and dry mills where the wood is dry and ready for manufacturing and finally producing the furniture that was requested. Schools place orders or we donate them from the Minister's Office at the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment.

## What does your job entail?

As Acting Mill Manager, I facilitate the everyday running of the factory, ensuring that I monitor performance areas of the staff that is based here to make sure we meet our targets. I manage the work conducted by the 10 contractors who have 12 participants each in training. All participants receive accredited certificates after training. This helps them when they apply for jobs to certify that professional recognised training has been completed.

## What is your role in creating employment?

We train our participants for a period of one year. The training provides skills development and poverty alleviation to the youth. Many young people who have left the programme are making a living from the skills that we have helped them to develop.

## What training does the factory provide to the youth?

We clear alien-invasive species in and around Pretoria through certified training on Health and Safety, First Aid, Branch Cutting, Herbicide and Chainsaw. Where harvesting is concerned, we do what is called Advanced Chain Saw. For the Wet and Dry Mill, we train participants on furniture manufacturing, stacking and de-stacking of planks and forklifting.

## Which careers opportunities are available for participants?

You can work for forestry manufacturers or companies that supply furniture for commercial furniture stores. Some companies also visit our eco-factories to request for machine operators.

## Which study streams are essential for such programmes?

If you are not in one of our Eco-Furniture Programmes, you can still find other avenues to be trained. Furniture manufacturing institutions like Skills to Furnish International and Furntech provide training in all types of heavy-duty machinery and how to operate them safely. It can be expensive for some but you will receive skills in different stages of manufacturing. Most FET colleges deliver a broad coverage on furniture making.

## How has the eco-furniture helped South Africans?

This programme has provided employment to most of our youth. It has provided skills development and empowered the most deserving. We welcome people with no qualifications or formal education. It's a stepping stone for many of our youth from disadvantaged backgrounds. Families do really rely on this income to sustain themselves. It might look little, but it helps to harness people's skills and provide a livelihood for them and their loved ones.

# Branch Profile: Forestry Management

By Tshegofatso Ndhlovu



**Above:** The forestry management branch is responsible for the monitoring of forests and facilitating research to advance forest science, economic development and technical services.

**T**he Forestry Management Branch aims to develop and facilitate the implementation of policies and targeted programmes to ensure the sustainable use, development, and management of forests. Its core functions include ensuring sustainable forest management in the regions, ensuring effective development of arboriculture, commercial and urban forestry.

**The Branch consists of the following three sub-programmes, namely:**

- **State Forest Management and Post Settlement Support**

This programme oversees the sustainable management of State Forests: Administer state forests land, settlement of land claims and ensure the implementation of the National Forest Act (NFA) and the National Veld and Forest Fire Act (NVFFA) of 1998.

- **Forestry Development**

This programme promotes forestry economic development, sector growth, transformation, and implementation of pro-poor forestry programmes.

- **Forestry Policy Management**

This programme formulates forestry policies, strategies, and frameworks to ensure effective development of the forestry sector.

### **Current projects and achievements**

- **Forestry masterplan**

The Forestry Sector Masterplan prioritises forestry in the Public Private Growth Initiative and is aligned with South Africa's 2019 re-imagined Industrial Strategy. Overseen by the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition and led by the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, the masterplan aims to spur investment, job creation, and competitiveness in the sector. This plan contributes to sustainable economic growth in forestry, in line with broader Re-imagined Industrial Strategy (RIS) and Public Private Growth Initiative (PPGI) objectives. The Masterplan has made significant strides in investment, competitiveness, and transformation. The targeted investment range for 2025/26 was set between R16.5 billion and R30 billion, and by 2022, it had already reached R25 billion.



### **About the contributor: Tshegofatso Ndhlovu**

Mr Tshegofatso Ndhlovu is a Senior Communications Officer in the Communications and Advocacy Chief Directorate. He holds an Advanced Diploma in Journalism from the Tshwane University of Technology and is an avid sports fan with his favourites being Tennis and Formula 1.

- **National greening programme**

The National Greening Programme sees the DFFE providing aid to Municipalities, NGOs, and corporate entities in implementing greening initiatives such as planting, tending and the management of vegetation in urban and rural areas.

The Ten Million Trees Programme was initiated in the 2021/22 fiscal year with plans to plant two million trees annually for five years. The programme includes the greening of schools with fruit and shade trees, promoting tree planting through the Arbor Month Campaign, and awarding municipalities excelling in greening efforts. It also involves greening low-income housing (RDP Homes) through community-driven tree planting under the Expanded Public Works Programme. Additionally, the programme rehabilitates degraded areas, particularly using Spekboom seedlings, allowing for more extensive planting compared to other targeted efforts in settlements, orchards, schools, and public spaces.

- **Job creation within the forestry sector**

The Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), originating from the 2003 Growth and Development Summit addresses government priorities like decent work, education, health, rural development, food security, and crime prevention. The programme spans over four

sectors which are Social, Infrastructure, Environment, and Culture, along with non-state entities. Since its launch in 2004, the programme has been operating nationwide, engaging at all government levels and state-owned enterprises. It aims to absorb labour and provide income for impoverished households, using public sector spending to create job opportunities. The programme is currently in its concluding phase with a focus on forestry and reporting to the environment and culture sector. The branch managing this phase oversees tasks related to forestry management, including approximately 64,000 hectares of B and C categorised plantations, 7 state nurseries, and the rehabilitation of about 18,969 hectares of State Indigenous Forests. Additionally, they facilitate greening projects within District Municipalities.

The Working for Forest Programme has exceeded its fourth phase targets for both work opportunities and full-time equivalents. In this phase, the programme aimed for 5,468 work opportunities and achieved 12,516, along with a target of 2,733 full-time equivalents and an achievement of 3,157. The successful transfer of plantations, as part of the Commercial Forestry Masterplan, is expected to impact job commitments positively, especially during recapitalisation efforts. Looking ahead to its fifth phase, the programme aims to create a total of 5,632 work opportunities and 2,815 full time equivalents over five years, from 2024 to 2029.



**Above:** Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, Ms Barbara Creecy plants an indigenous tree in Gqeberha, Eastern Cape.

# Notable natural forests of SA

By Tshegofatso Ndhlovu

**F**orests in South Africa are divided into three broad categories: natural forests, woodlands and plantations. Natural forests and woodlands are all naturally occurring and composed of indigenous species. There are over 1300 indigenous tree and shrub species in South Africa, most of which are associated with natural forests and woodlands. Plantation forests cover an area of approximately 1.3 million ha, which are mainly planted with exotic trees such as pine, eucalyptus, wattle and a few other species. Plantation forestry was initiated in South Africa as a measure to substitute timber from indigenous trees, the exploitation of which threatened the survival of our natural forests. There are now more than 1000 introduced tree and shrub species planted for various beneficial purposes in South Africa.

Over the course of a century, the commercial forestry enterprise developed into a significant economic sector in South Africa. The sector contributes about 1% to the GDP. Mpumalanga province represents the largest afforested area followed by KwaZulu-Natal. The industry employs about 67 000 people.

## Importance of forests

Forests are essential to the environment as they help in mitigating floods, in purifying water, as well as playing a big role in climate change mitigation. Forests help support global genetic diversity by providing habitat for a great variety of plant species, invertebrates and other animals. Some plants and animals that occur in our South African forests are rare and endangered species. Forests also aid in the livelihoods of people where more than 1.5 million households in South Africa depend on products such as fuel wood, fencing material, medicinal plants and food products.

## Newlands Forest, Western Cape



Situated on the eastern slopes of Table Mountain near the Cape Town suburbs of Newlands and Rondebosch. This forest is managed by the National Parks Board as part of the Table Mountain National Park and covers an area of about 4 square kilometres and is one of the places in South Africa where oak trees were first planted in the 1600's for timber.

**Flora:** Western Cape Afro temperate forest type with Yellowwood trees (*Podocarpus latifolius*); Wild Peach (*Kiggelaria africana*), White Pear (*Apodytes dimidiata*) as well as *Cunonia capensis*.

**Fauna:** African Olive Pigeon, Cape Canary and Eurasian Chaffinch.

**Activities:** A popular walking and jogging destination, the forest is situated at the foot of Table Mountain and provide hiking trail access to both Devil's Peak and Table Mountain with various picnic sites.

## Knysna Forests (Diepwalle), Western Cape



Known as the Diepwalle forest, this forest is located 21.4km north of Knysna along the R339. It is one of several forest management units in the Knysna area. Managed by SANParks for conservation and tourism, the forest was managed by The Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment over the last century for conservation as well as high value timber production. Logging of these forests has been discontinued.

**Flora:** Southern Cape Afro temperate forest type with Yellowwood trees (*Afrocarpus falcatus* and *Podocarpus latifolius*), Ironwood (*Olea capensis*), Stinkwood (*Ocotea bullata*) and White Pear (*Apodytes imidiata*) among a rich variety of tree species. Several fern species can be found in humid parts of the forest, including *Cyathea capensis*, which is a large forest tree fern.

**Fauna:** The Knysna forest elephants, which contributed much to forest legend, are rarely seen nowadays. Significant mammals and birds include leopard, bushbuck, bush pig, the crowned eagle and the Knysna turaco.

**Activities:** Walks and camping are available with forest chalet accommodation; King Edward VII tree (exceptionally large Yellowwood tree – a declared Champion Tree) and the Forest Legend Museum.

## Cintsa Coastal Dune Forests, Eastern Cape



Located in the town of Cintsa on the coast, 50km north-east of East London, parts of this forest system occur on private land; however, a thin strip of this forest system falls within the East London Coast Nature Reserve, which is managed by Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Authority. Besides their role in protection of the dune system, the Eastern Cape Dune Forests contribute significantly to the scenic quality of this part of the coast and thus support the tourism industry in general.

**Flora:** Eastern Cape Dune Forest type with important tree species such as Coast Silver Leaf (*Brachylaena discolor*), Guarri (*Euclea natalensis*), Dune False Crowberry (*Allophylus natalensis*), Ironwood (*Olea capensis*), and White Pear (*Apodytes dimidiata*). The wild banana (*Strelitzia nicolai*) is an iconic element of the dune forest and has become a popular garden subject in warmer parts all over South Africa.

**Fauna:** The dune forests support a rich variety of butterflies. Important mammals include Caracal, Blue duiker, Bushbuck, Giant golden mole and the Dark-footed forest shrew.

**Activities:** The sensitivity of the ecosystem limits activities inside the forest. Butterfly enthusiasts will be well entertained by the diversity, and bird watching may be rewarding. The rich vegetation will captivate amateur botanists. The proximity to the coast provides for a diversified portfolio of activity-based tourism, especially during the wintertime Sardine run.

## Hawaan Forest, KwaZulu-Natal

The Hawaan Forest is located on the northern edge of Umhlanga, about 18km north of Durban CBD; City of Ethekwini and covers about 80 to 110ha.



This forest is a large remnant of climax dry coastal dune forest. About half of the forest's total extent is considered to be primary forest that has remained intact for an estimated 18 000 years. A protected forest since 1860, it is currently under the guardianship of the Wildlife and Environment Society of Southern Africa (WESSA) but is owned by the Tongaat Hullet Group.

**Flora:** KwaZulu-Natal Coastal Forest type with up to 147 indigenous tree species that have been identified. Noteworthy species include: Natal Coshwood (*Cola natalensis*); the endemic Natal Hickory (*Cavacoa aurea*); Forest Fever Berry (*Croton sylvaticus*); and White Stinkwood (*Celtis africana*).

**Fauna:** The forest has a rich bird fauna of up to 100 species which include Cardinal Woodpecker, Crested Guinea Fowl, Crowned Eagle, Spotted Crown Thrush, Purple Crested Turaco and Fiery Nightjar. There is a significant reptile fauna represented by snakes such as African Rock Python, Mozambican spitting cobra and both species of Mamba as well as Leguaan (water monitor lizard).

**Activities:** Guided walks have to be arranged with WESSA in advance; bird watching and tree spotting may enrich the walking experience.

## Mariepskop Forests, Mpumalanga



Located on the Blyde River Canyon – with Hoedspruit and Acornhoek being the nearest towns; on the border between Mpumalanga and Limpopo Provinces; within the local municipality of Bushbuckridge.



The Forest has been managed by the Department for Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment as a state forest over the last century.

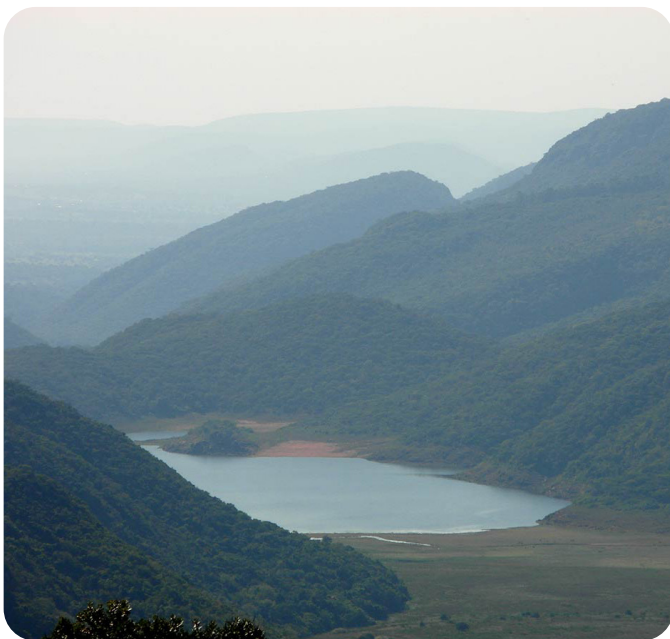
The forest management unit is now incorporated into the Blyde River Canyon Nature Reserve and is managed by Mpumalanga Parks and Tourism Authority. The Mariepskop forest area is under rehabilitation towards natural vegetation and is being managed as part of the Kruger to Canyons biosphere reserve.

**Flora:** Northern Afrotropical Forest Group; Mpumalanga Mistbelt Forest type. Mixed evergreen forests, dominated by *Xymalos monospora* and with generalist natural forest species such as *Rapanea melanophloeos*, *Ilex mitis*, and *Curtisia dentata* (protected) and *Celtis africana*. Distinct tree species include *Ocotea kenyensis*, *Heteropyxis canescens*, *Pittosporum viridiflorum* (protected) and *Schefflera umbellifera*. A number of vine species occur, among other the vigorous *Rhoicissus rhomboidea*.

**Fauna:** Birds include the Crowned Eagle, Narina Trogon, Trumpeter Hornbill, Bush Black Cap, Bluemantled Flycatcher, and Wood Owl. Mammals include Bushbuck, Red Duiker, Samango Monkey, Chacma Baboon and Leopard. The Mariepskop forests support a rich variety of butterflies, including the endemic *Charaxes marieps*.

**Activities:** Hiking, bird watching and tree spotting are some of the activities offered together with a picnic area lower down the mountain. Limited rustic accommodation has to be reserved in advance.

## Thathe Vondo Forest, Limpopo



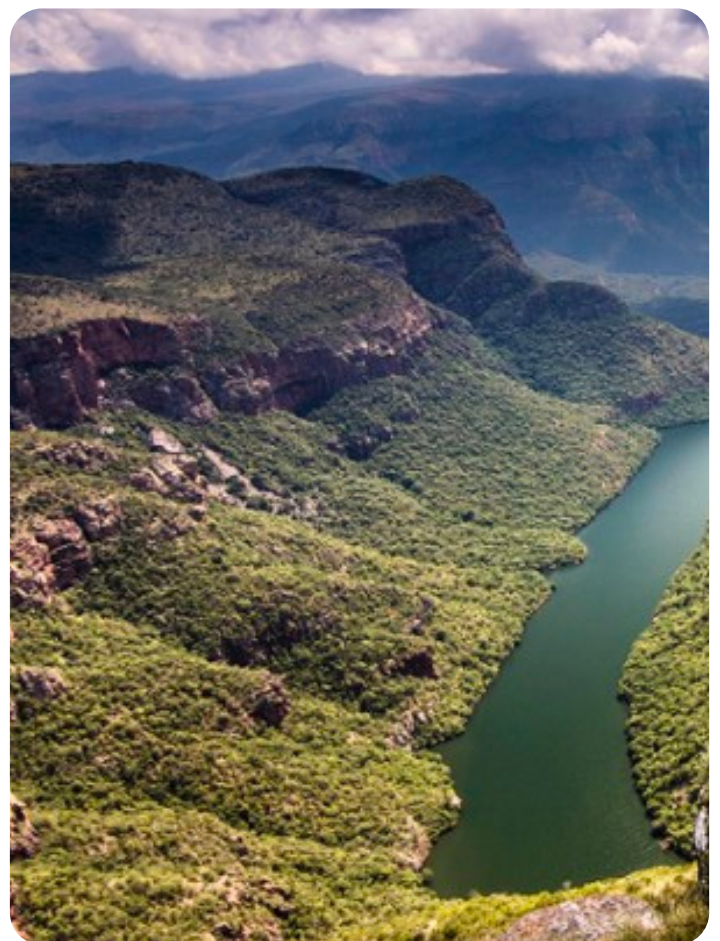
Located in the Soutpansberg mountains near Sibasa, in the vicinity of Thohoyandou; Vhembe District, the Thathe Vondo Forest is a Trust forest, and hence also a State Forest with the Tshivhase Traditional Authority having played a long-standing role in protecting this forest. The

forest is sacred to the Venda people of Limpopo and it is believed that the forest is patrolled by a sacred white lion, which protects the graves of the chiefs of the Thathe Clan who are buried in this sacred place. The forest includes a variety of medicinal plants and commercial timber plantations which were established in association with the natural forests dating back to 1949.

**Flora:** Northern Mistbelt Forest type, Dominated by *Xymalos monospora* with *Combretum kraussii*, *Cussonia spicata*, *Croton sylvaticus*, *Olea capensis* and *Trichillia dregeana*. Vines and creeper plants include *Acacia ataxacantha* and *Rhoicissus rhomboidea*. Epiphytic ferns and rich herbaceous flora can be found in humid parts of the forest.

**Fauna:** Birds include the Crowned Eagle, Chorister Robin-chat, Yellow-streaked Greenbul, Grey Cuckooshrike, Bluemantled Flycatcher and the Orange Ground-thrush. Mammals include Bushbuck, Samango monkey, and Woodland Dormouse. Among reptiles and amphibians, a variety of snakes may occur, as well as Transvaal Forest Rainfrog.

**Activities:** A Walk and drive-through along the main road is available as access to the forest is restricted. The Sagole Baobab (largest tree in South Africa – a declared Champion tree) can be found not far from this forest.



**Above:** The Blyde River Canyon is a 26km long Canyon located in Mpumalanga, South Africa. It is one of the larger canyons on Earth. It is a "green canyon" which is dominated by subtropical vegetation. The canyon forms part of the Blyde River Canyon Nature Reserve.

# District Development Model making good progress

By Madimetja Mogotlane



**Above:** Deputy Minister Makhotso Sotyu accompanies Deputy President Paul Mashatile to key District Development Model projects in North West.



**From left:** The Deputy Minister Sotyu, Deputy President Paul Mashatile, the acting Premier of North West Province, Ms Nono Maloyi, and the Chief of Ba-Ga-Mothibi, Kgosi Ponatshego Mothibi donated bicycles to Rebone Sediba Primary School in Seoding Village.



**From left:** Deputy Minister of Health, Dr Sibongeni Dhlomo, Deputy President Paul Mashatile, and Deputy Minister Makhotso Sotyu during tree-planting trees at Ba Ga-Mothibi Community Health Centre.

The Deputy Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, Ms Makhotso Sotyu has commended the impact and progress of the District Development Model (DDM) in the North West Province. The Deputy Minister, in her capacity as the Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompoti District Municipality National Champion was accompanying Deputy President Paul Mashatile to the official opening of the Ga ga-Mothibi Community Health Centre in Sekhing Village in Taung on 29 September 2023.

"There is nothing we have not done in this District. We bought you five latest model waste trucks for five municipalities to be used for waste removal. We also discovered that these municipalities do not have enough money to pay for workers and as the department we instructed them to recruit unemployed people and we will assist. We did not even look at the requirements of having a matric certificate because we know there are impoverished families that we did not want to sideline," she said.

Deputy Minister Sotyu also accompanied Deputy President to Rebone Sediba Primary School in Seoding Village where they donated 68 bicycles to learners. Speaking to residents, Deputy Minister appealed to them to take care of the environment.

"Our environment is not that clean and we are looking at improving it. If there is nowhere you can dump waste, please consult with your local Councillors on proper channels to follow in disposing waste. The President has

given us the mandate to work closely with municipalities to manage landfill sites and we appeal to our people to refrain from littering," she said.

Deputy Minister Sotyu also used the moment to urge residents to take care of their heritage site to improve the economy in the province.

"As the champion of the District Development model, I visited all the municipalities to listen to their challenges and assist where possible. One of the places I visited was the Taung Child Site. This heritage site presents economic opportunities in the district and the province and we realised it has not been given enough care so working closely with the province and the district, we are turning it into a hospitable and friendly world heritage site. You have a role to play in this heritage site to make it look attractive. This will improve our economy so that when international tourists visit it, they experience its warmth and tranquility", she said.

The Chief of Ba-Ga-Mothibi, Kgosi Ponatshego Mothibi said the Deputy Minister is a beacon of hope in the district.

"I have been monitoring your work in the district and what you are doing for our people cannot be left unrecognised. Many jobs were created because of your involvement, and we are grateful for that. Your actions speak volumes, and this district is very proud of you," she said.



## About the contributor: Madimetja Mogotlane

Madimetja Mogotlane is a Senior Communications Officer within the Sub-Directorate: Internal Communications and Events.

# Arbor Day career exhibition

By Madimetjha Mogottlane

South Africans celebrate Arbor Month in September which is aimed at promoting the greening of our country, creating awareness on the importance of trees and forests, and showcasing forestry projects that aim to develop communities. While Deputy Minister

Makhotso Sotyhu was working with municipalities and other organisations to green the country and to ensure environmental conservation and development, and its associated benefits, other DFFE staff also hosted a career exhibition in Seshego, Polokwane.



**Above:** Ms Palesa Mashego from the Directorate: Environmental and Sector Education is capacitating learners from Kabelo Secondary School about Green careers.



**Above:** A learner from Moruleng Secondary School studies information on forestry-related careers.



**Above:** Mr Tinyiko Khosa from the Directorate Forestry Advisory Services with learners from Kabelo Secondary School.



**Above:** Ms Tinyiko Tshabalala from the Chief Directorate: Communications & Advocacy with learners from Khaiso Secondary School during Arbor Day career exhibition in Seshego.



## Ms Nelly Ndlovu

### Building the future of forestry management

By Tshegofatso Ndhlovu

**E**stablished in 2009 through the Forest Sector Charter to oversee and facilitate the implementation of the Charter, the role of the Forest Sector Charter Council (FSCC) is to monitor the implementation of the Forest Sector Code and see to it that the scorecard and undertakings made by business and government are implemented while making sure that the code is widely publicised.

The Council includes representatives from industry, labour, Government and forestry communities and reports to the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment.

In her Role as Chairperson of the FSCC, Ms Nelly Ndlovu is tasked with providing leadership to the council while overseeing the implementation of the council's strategic goals.

#### **Describe your role as chairperson of the Forest Sector Charter Council**

As chairperson of the FSCC, my role is not only limited to chairing council and executive committee meetings but I am tasked with providing overall leadership to the council, and providing strategic direction that is ethically and financially sound. Where possible, the role also involves assisting with the council's strategic goals and providing clarity for effective implementation.

#### **How long have you been working in forestry?**

Fifteen seems to be a recurring number in the FSCC, as the Council turns 15 next year and this year saw both Ms Makhosazana Mavimbela (FSCC Executive Director) and myself celebrate 15 years in the Forestry Industry. Although, my journey in the Sector has been slightly longer as I spent two years prior working for Mondi Forests at Mondi South Africa focusing on the paper-side of the Forest Products value-chain.

#### **How did you get into the Forestry sector?**

My path was through procurement, which took me from forest products and into the forestry

side of Mondi's business operations. The nature of what I do, and the vertical integrated nature of Mondi means I had the potential to move along the value chain from resource creation to production. The same is true for many of the roles at Mondi, you could do HR, operational management, finance, health and safety to name a few anywhere along the chain and this gives employees the potential for huge exponential growth.

### What does a day in your life look like?

No two days ever look the same in my line of work. One day you can be engaging with government representatives and the next, you could be working alongside small-scale growers in a rural location. There are so many different forestry stakeholders to engage with and that is what makes this industry and the opportunities it provides so diverse.

That being said, I do try to bring some rhythm and routine into my daily life. I am a mother of two, so ensuring my daughters are prepared for school is an important aspect of my morning routine, so is meditation and being out in nature for a 5 to 7km walk at least three times a week.

### What do you enjoy most about your work?

The impact the forestry sector has on everyone from employees, communities and the broader forestry landholdings. The sector is committed to developing, upskilling and empowering people through entrepreneurship programmes, supporting small businesses, gender equality and sustainable job creation. The Forestry Sector invests millions of rands into programmes, projects and initiatives that will improve the lives and livelihoods of people living in some of the most impoverished rural communities in South Africa, seeing first-hand the impact of these programmes, makes me incredibly proud to be part of this sector.

### Where do you draw your inspiration from?

My family has a huge impact on my life. My late father achieved great success through hard work, resilience, and love for family.

### What has been the biggest achievement in your career?

Being appointed chairperson of the FSCC as the representative body driving the transformation agenda of the Forest Sector's value chain. Its values align perfectly with my own and it is a huge honour to lead the FSCC on its next phase of seeing more black-owned businesses established, more youth benefiting from the sector's skills development initiatives and employment opportunities while promoting diversity and inclusion, in particular of women, across all spheres of our sector.

## How can young people get into forestry?

The youth of today need to grasp that they have the potential to change their tomorrow, to look for the gaps and research where they can make the greatest impact, to listen and absorb then reimagine and create a new future for themselves and South Africa. Forestry is a Sector that is always evolving and as stated previously, is vertically integrated and therefore diverse in the opportunities it offers. I would urge anyone to look at forestry and investigate whether the broad opportunities it has to offer match any of their interests, values and beliefs they hold strong.



The youth of today need to grasp that they have the potential to change their tomorrow, to look for the gaps and research where they can make the greatest impact, to listen and absorb then reimagine and create a new future for themselves and South Africa.

### Quick Facts

- **Hometown:** Pietermaritzburg.
- **Role Model:** My late father.
- **What are you currently reading:** Thrive: The power of resilience, by Richard Sutton.
- **Hobbies:** Reading, travelling and interior decorating.
- **Favourite Motto/Quote:** Today is your opportunity to build the tomorrow you want so never give up or surrender to failure.

The Elandsberg Nature Reserve was formally declared a provincial nature reserve in 2008 in recognition of its importance to conservation. (Image from Bartholomeus Klip)

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