

Environment Quarterly

Kwartaalike Omgewingsverslag • Tikologo ka Kotara • Mupo nga Kotara

NATIONAL ARBOR MONTH

30 YEARS OF ENVIRONMENTAL
SUSTAINABILITY



**SA leads charge to
enhance drought resilience**



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:

Marakele National Park, Limpopo

This national park is located in the transitional zone between the dry western and moister eastern regions of South Africa, therefore allowing for a remarkable variety of wildlife. A moderate and pleasant climate ensures an enjoyable stay, with perfect summer rainfalls keeping the worst heat at bay.

The area now constituting Marakele was home to several iron-age settlements which are not yet open to public viewing. Prior to its foundation as a National Park, it was home to naturalist Eugène Marais. Marakele was founded as Kransberg National Park in 1994 with the purchase of 150 square kilometres (58 sq mi), and was shortly after renamed to its current name. By 1999, the park had expanded to 670 square kilometres (260 sq mi).



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



Editorial: Springing into environment action



Dear Valued Stakeholder,

Hello and welcome to the September edition of Environment Quarterly. Spring has definitely sprung and in this issue, we bring you all the important events and highlights from the environment sector, including the annual Arbour Month celebrations that take place alongside our Heritage Month celebrations in South Africa.

In addition to waste management efforts to try and keep our country litter-free, the department also encourages every

South African to plant a tree in places that need more trees. Rising to the occasion with this year's Arbour theme, the Deputy Minister Bernice Swarts planted 30 trees in Pretoria.

The theme "Celebrating 30 Years of Freedom: Promoting environmental conservation and sustainable forest Management" coincided well with the planting of trees and reminded all South Africans about the importance of caring for our environment by making every effort to make it look healthy and beautiful.

In our cover story, we focus on the all-important issue of land degradation in South Africa and the impacts of climate change on food resources and stability as well the methods and interventions explored by the department to combat land degradation for a sustainable future. Our Senior Writer, Zibuse Ndlovu visits the Branch Biodiversity and Conservation to find out more about the land restoration efforts from government and involved communities.

In our leadership feature this quarter, we sit down for a chat with the Deputy Director-General: Waste Management,

Mme Mamogala Mosekene about her dreams, aspirations as well as the important work she does in the department. As a leader, the DDG says she believes in immediate problem-solving skills and strategies for changing environments. She also advises other career climbers to work as hard as they can in their 20s to push their career aspirations because it gets trickier in your 30s and beyond balancing between work, school and family life.

In other news, this month, we bid farewell to one of our senior writers, Veronica Mahlaba as she takes on new challenges in her career. "Vero" as we affectionately called her was a dedicated team player who had been with the department for over a decade and covered a wide range of stories, interacting with everyone from our political leadership to exciting features with local community members on the ground. We wish Vero all the best in her future endeavours.

Until next time,

Editor

Erica

Meet our team

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Erica Mathye

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For more information visit: www.dffe.gov.za or call 086 111 2468

NATIONAL ARBOR MONTH

September

is Arbor Month in South Africa. It's when we raise awareness about the importance of trees, and encourage South Africans to protect indigenous forests and prevent veld fires.

Protect indigenous forests

• Prevent veld and forest fires

• Choose water-saving indigenous trees



Add fruit trees to your garden

• Use water-wise planting methods

• Plant a tree to combat climate change



What can I do to help protect trees?

There are many ways you can make a difference!



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SA leads charge to enhance drought resilience

By Zibuse Ndlovu



Archive photo: Local communities are the beneficiaries of EPWP jobs, training and other skills development. Restoration benefits for communities range from ecological rehabilitation interventions to ensure ecosystem integrity and healthy landscapes.

In the arid expansive landscapes, a silent crisis looms as desertification and droughts threaten the very fabric of ecosystems. The relentless march of semi-desert sands and the scarcity of water have cast a shadow over vast tracts of land, challenging communities and wildlife alike. However, amidst these harsh environmental realities, a beacon of hope emerges, thanks to the Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment (DFFE). Through its strategic initiatives and innovative measures, the DFFE is leading the charge to enhance drought resilience and bolster food security for a sustainable future.

One of the key strategic initiatives spearheaded by the DFFE is the Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) targets. The DFFE's Control Biodiversity Officer, Mr Asivhanzhi Makhale, explains that the Department's LDN targets aim to preserve healthy and productive land resources in alignment with national sustainable development priorities through sustainable land management practices and ecosystem restoration. "Under these targets, we are actively engaged in various initiatives across diverse biomes, including the restoration of degraded landscapes, wetlands, and catchments, as well as the removal of invasive alien species. We are also dedicated to raising awareness about the impacts of drought and strategies for community

adaptation and resilience," Mr Makhale elaborates. At the core of the DFFE's land restoration efforts lies a steadfast commitment to combating desertification through comprehensive and integrated strategies. By embracing nature-based solutions and empowering local communities to become custodians of the land, the DFFE is paving the way for sustainable coexistence with the environment. Ms Mukondi Matshusa, the Director for Biodiversity and Conservation, underscores the critical role of land stewardship in achieving shared land restoration objectives. These goals include rehabilitating degraded riparian areas, catchments, and waterbodies through the removal of invasive alien plants. "Through education and active participation, land stewardship empowers individuals and groups to take ownership of their local environments, thereby driving successful restoration initiatives. A prime example of this collaborative spirit can be observed in the Umngeni and Umzimvubu catchment area initiative, which brings together stakeholders to work collectively toward a common restoration goal," says Ms Matshusa.

Globally, a multitude of significant environmental challenges are emerging simultaneously, threatening livelihoods, communities, and ecological balance. Among these pressing issues is the pervasive problem of land degradation and desertification, a crisis affecting approximately 3.2

billion people worldwide. This degradation not only leads to loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services but also results in an economic toll exceeding 10% of the annual gross product, leaving landscapes unable to recover naturally.

South Africa, renowned for its rich ecosystems and natural heritage, is among the nations grappling with the intensifying crisis of land degradation and desertification. With the majority of its soils classified as fragile, a study by the United Nations Development Programme (UNEP) reveals that about 60% of South Africa's land is degraded, with a staggering 91% vulnerable to desertification. The latest 2022 UNCCD Country report indicates that approximately 29.6% of the country is already in a degraded state.

In recent years, South Africa has witnessed a concerning acceleration in land degradation, marked by a significant decline in land quality and productivity, which poses substantial threats to ecosystems and communities alike. "This degradation jeopardizes biodiversity, agricultural output, and socio-economic stability. Despite being a water-scarce nation, South Africa faces desertification challenges, particularly in regions like the Northern Cape, where once-fertile lands are succumbing to encroaching desertification. The processes driving land degradation in the country are exacerbated by both natural forces and human activities, including climate change, deforestation, unsustainable agricultural practices, urbanization, soil erosion, and invasive species. With 80% of South Africa's land dedicated to agriculture and subsistence livelihoods, communal croplands and grazing areas are particularly vulnerable, while sheet and gully erosion currently affects nearly 0.72 million hectares, steadily increasing the environmental strain," cautions Ms Matshusa.

Another notable initiative by the Department is the Great Green Wall initiative, which is widely implemented by the Southern African Development Community Member States. "The aim of this initiative is to address issues of land degradation, desertification, drought while supporting community livelihoods through projects and programmes focusing on food security and climate resilient. With the financial resources provided through the Global Environment Facility Small Grants by the United Nations Development Programme, the initiative is supporting 6 community projects which are focusing on improving household food security, climate smart food gardens, agroforestry, agroecological plant production, sustainable land management in the Eastern Cape Province," says Ms Matshusa.

In addition, South Africa is part of the AFR100, an African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative, which is a country-led effort to bring 100 million hectares of land in Africa into restoration by 2030. "We are amongst the 34 African countries that have joined the AFR100 Initiative and committed to restoring 3.6 million hectares of degraded landscapes by 2030. Currently, the AFR100 is providing support to rural farmers in the Machubeni communal area of the Eastern Cape Province to improve livelihoods of women and youths through agricultural activities such as climate-smart agriculture and the production of fodder, including forage sorghum and Lucerne (*Medicago sativa*). Wool production is a significant enterprise in Machubeni, involving over 40% of the women in the communal area. Six tonnes of inputs have been purchased in collaboration with Conservation International and the African Union Development Agency-New Partnership for African Development as a pilot project in Machubeni," explains Ms Matshusa.

Furthermore, the AFR100 will support improved rangeland management practices, such as the rotational resting of 5, 000 hectares of grazing paddocks, to enhance the programme under the Great Green Wall Initiative. Local farmers will receive training in simple restoration techniques, fodder production, and eco-ranger responsibilities to monitor rangeland conditions. The South African government through the DFFE and various stakeholders, is committed to restoring degraded lands and combating desertification with a strong emphasis on community involvement. It has initiated several significant restoration efforts to rehabilitate degraded lands and combat desertification while empowering local communities by promoting sustainable practices that contribute to both environmental conservation and socio-economic development.

The Department remains steadfast in implementing programmes and projects aimed at rehabilitating, restoring and conserving the country's degraded landscapes. These efforts contribute to different measures and commitments that the country has put in place to address issues of desertification, land degradation and drought. "Such include our commitments through the Land Degradation Neutrality targets, African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiatives Commitments, The global Biodiversity Framework and its targets, the White Paper on Conservation and Sustainable Use of South Africa's Biodiversity. All these interventions and commitments reaffirm our aim to restore, rehabilitate and conserve degraded land and other ecosystems by 2030," concludes Ms Matshusa.

Since 1995, substantial efforts and resources have been devoted to halting degradation. The Environmental Programmes (EP) serve as one of the core pillars of conservation and environmental management in South Africa. Ms Mahuma Ramashala, is the Deputy Director for Environmental Programmes, she says EP implements interventions (former 'Working for' programmes) to protect and preserve natural resources, manage risks and create jobs for previously disadvantaged and socio-economically vulnerable communities. "Local communities benefit from EPWP jobs, training and other skills development opportunities. The restoration benefits for communities range from ecological rehabilitation interventions that ensure ecosystem integrity to improve water quality and quantity, biodiversity and healthy landscapes," says Ms Ramashala.

The dedicated efforts of the DFFE, coupled with collaborative global initiatives, are not merely mitigating the effects of desertification and drought—they are reshaping the future. By revitalizing degraded lands, nurturing resilient ecosystems, and empowering communities through sustainable practices, these initiatives stand as a powerful testament to the resilience and adaptability of both nature and humanity. As the horizon glows with the promise of recovery and renewal, our journey toward environmental restoration offers a beacon of hope and a model for global action against the encroaching threats of land degradation.



Above: The restoration of degraded landscapes is a cooperative and community-based initiative for the sustainable use of resources with the main aims to combat poverty by generating jobs via the implementation of several conservation and rehabilitation programmes.



Above: Land rehabilitation and restoration of degraded landscapes is expensive and requires a lot of financial and human resources. The issues of desertification, land degradation and drought cut across the mandate of different departments and institutions as well as civil society organisation and private entities.



Above: Throughout the African continent, drought causes large-scale water and food deficits, hunger, famine, migration of people and animals, diseases, fatalities and many other severe, chronic societal problems. Drought, however, is not limited to Africa but is a global problem that affects many parts of the world, including both poor and rich countries, developed and developing ones.



Above: Removal of invasive alien species. Invasive alien plant species can be a major cause of ecosystem degradation.



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..

SA commits to developing early warning systems

By Dimphe Matlanato



Above: Deputy Minister, Ms Bernice Swarts with WMO Representative on EW4All; Dr Johan Stander, SAWS CEO Mr Ishaam Abader, UN Resident Coordinator for South Africa Mr Nelson Muffuh and other representatives from international organisations active in Early Warning Systems; government; civil society, climate and disaster risk information; and the private sector at the EW4All Workshop.

A key part of building climate resilience is to set up Early Warning Systems that communities can prepare for disasters before they happen.” These were the words shared by the Deputy Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, Ms Bernice Swarts during her opening address at the National Consultative Workshop on Early Warnings for All (EW4All) hosted by the South African Weather Service (SAWS), on 26 August 2024 at Diep In Die Berg in Wapadrand, Pretoria.

The EW4All is a global groundbreaking United Nations (UN) initiative that seeks to ensure that everyone on earth is protected by early warning systems by 2027 and aims to reduce the impact of disasters and the vulnerability of populations through four pillars:

- Improving disaster risk knowledge management.
- Detection, observation, monitoring, analysis and forecasting of hazards.
- Warning dissemination and communication.
- Promoting community preparedness to respond.

According to the UN, Early Warning Systems have helped decrease the number of deaths and have reduced losses and damages resulting from hazardous weather, water or climate events.

Delivering her address Deputy Minister Swarts, emphasised the need for collaboration at the workshop, acknowledging the progress made by

SAWS and partners. “There is an urgent need for like-minded organisations like yourselves to pull together, rallying behind the common goal of saving lives from the effects of severe weather events”.

She further noted the ongoing challenge of reaching vulnerable communities with timely and effective warnings.

“The SAWS recently implemented a new warning system called Impact-Based Severe Weather Warning Systems which focuses on communicating the impact of the severe weather events. However, these warning dissemination channels are not sufficient to reach the most vulnerable people, especially those in remote areas to ensure that warning messages reach the 57 million plus population of South Africa,” said Deputy Minister Swarts.

In agreement with the Deputy Minister, SAWS CEO, Mr Ishaam Abader stated that the country needs to scale up early warning systems. “We are looking as part of this workshop to see how we can strengthen what we have in place already. So that we can actually scale up early warning programmes. For example, things like early warning dissemination and communication,” he said.

The three-day event brought together stakeholders from various sectors with the aim to assess the current state of early warning systems in South Africa.



About the contributor: Dimphe Matlanato

Dimphe Matlanato was an intern in the Chief Directorate: Communications. She holds a BA Degree in Journalism from the University of Johannesburg.

Deputy Director-General Mamogala Musekene

By Veronica Mahlaba

The beautiful valleys of the Klein Letaba River catchment and the mountains of Magoebaskloof in Limpopo are what inspired Deputy Director-General: Chemicals and Waste Management, Ms Mamogala Musekene to have an environmental career. "Such beauty deserves stewards that would ensure that it is not only this generation that benefit from their great scenic views and ecosystems services, but the future generations will also have a chance to experience them," explained Ms Musekene.

She joined the Department in November 2015 as a Chief Director: Integrated Waste Management. DDG Musekene holds a Bachelor of Science in Chemistry and Physics from the University of the North commonly known as Turfloop, a Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Chemistry from Rand Afrikaans Universiteit and Executive Development Programme from North-West University.

1. What drives your passion in the job you do in the Department?

The challenges posed by pollution are always evolving and require dynamic problem-solving strategies. Reforming public policy to move from end-of-pipe focus and moving upstream to tackle product design as part of promoting circular economy keeps me interested in this pollution prevention and management field. It is not the typical, 'sausage factory' that follow mundane routine. This ever-changing and state of flux is what challenges me and keep me on my toes.

2. What do you find most challenging and rewarding about working for the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment?

Challenging: The sustainable development pillars come together in the various socio-political, environment and economic interests. Whether it is the marginalised groups or the captains of industry, managing their different interests as part of

In her element, Deputy Director-General Mamogala Musekene addressing delegates at the Waste to Energy Workshop.

environmental management linked to pollution prevention and management require astute stakeholder management.

Rewarding: Striking the sustainable development balance wherein a policy outcome can demonstrate that caring for the environment through environmentally sound management of chemicals and waste is able to provide the much-needed socio-economic benefits, for example jobs.

3. What, in your opinion, makes a good leader?

A situational leader that can employ relevant and appropriate strategies as dictated by the changing environment who can influence others towards a specific positive result and boost the team morale is inspirational. Focusing on what is important, acclimatisation and/or adaptive ability are key traits for leadership.

4. If you had to describe yourself in one sentence, what would it be?

Mamogala is a daughter, wife, sister and mother. I embrace all these roles as they give meaning to my life.

5. What do you consider to be your single greatest achievement in your career life?

Interestingly, I had received a bursary from the then Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Air Quality unit that supported my 2nd and 3rd year for my junior B.Sc. degree. Although I did try to give my service to the Department after qualifying in 2000 and 2001, the universe did not align. I was given a great opportunity to serve within the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) as part of water resource management mainly focusing on water quality management. The experience and skills attained in DWS prepared me for my role in Chemicals and Waste Management. So, when President Ramaphosa in his SONA earlier this year made mention of *Tintswalo*,

I was reminded of the contribution that my country did for me back in 1998 and 1999 in the dawn of democracy by funding my bursary for my junior B.Sc. degree. Although John F Kennedy said, "ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country," I remain forever indebted to the visionary leaders of the first democratic South Africa that invested in the young person that I was in 1998 and 1999 to get to the leader I am today.

6. Any advice on maintaining a work-life balance?

Having specific times as being off limits helps. I keep my weekends for family, friends and indulging in self-care. It is not always easy to manage these times during hectic weekdays, but it is a constant strive and effort.

7. If you could give your 20-year-old self any advice, what would it be?

Push the post graduate degrees as far as you reasonably can before joining the workplace, it gets harder to juggle studies, work, social and family life.

8. What would your advice be to those who want to follow the same career path as you?

The environmental science field is vast and specialisation on pollution prevention and management can even cover different environmental media.

Quick facts

Home town: Limpopo, Lebowakgomo.

Favourite quote or motto: I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Hobbies: Travelling, Movies.

Do you use Facebook or Twitter? Facebook.



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.

A prosperous and equitable society living in harmony with our natural resources



Ms Bernice Swarts | Deputy Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment



Dr Dion George | Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment



Mr Narend Singh | Deputy Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment



Ms Nonkqubela Pieters | Eastern Cape MEC for Economic Development, Environment and Tourism



Ms Elizabeth Cornelia Rockman
Free State MEC for Agriculture, Rural Development and Environmental Affairs



Ms Sheila Mary Peters
Gauteng MEC for Environment



Rev Musa Zondi | KZN MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs



Mr Tshitereke Baldwin Matibe
Limpopo MEC for Economic Development, Environment and Tourism



Ms Nompumelelo Hlophe | Mpumalanga MEC for Agriculture, Rural Development, Land and Environmental Affairs



Ms Mase Manopole | Northern Cape MEC for Agriculture, Environmental Affairs, Rural Development and Land Reform



Ms Bitsa Lenkopane | North-West MEC for Economic Development, Environment, Conservation and Tourism



Mr Anton Bredell | Western Cape MEC for Environmental Affairs and Development Plan



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& the environment**

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Thriving ecosystems drive economic growth

By SANBI

South Africa convened its third national forum on Natural Capital Accounting (NCA) at Statistics South Africa's Isibalo House in Pretoria on 7 and 8 August 2024, stressing the growing importance of recognising our reliance on nature and how healthy functioning ecosystems and biodiversity underpin economic growth and job creation. The Statistician General was joined by the Director-General of the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment and the Chief Executive Office of the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI), in welcoming delegates from government, environmental groups and the financial world. The theme of the forum was 'NCA Making Waves', emphasising how NCA is starting to have a real impact on national planning and financial reporting.

Traditionally, a country's economy is measured using the System of National Accounts (SNA 2008), which gives us well-known figures like Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Such statistics are crucial for understanding the economy, planning investments, and tracking performance. But this form of reporting hugely underestimates the connections between the economy and the environment. A paper in the international journal *Nature* earlier this year showed that, for 163 countries, the produced capital has doubled since 1990, but natural capital has halved. This is not sustainable.

NCA is a way to bring nature into the same frameworks as other types of national accounting. It is based on the internationally adopted System of Environmental-Economic Accounting.

Measured in terms of its natural capital, South Africa is among the richest countries in the world. It has more plants, reptiles, birds, mammals and marine species than its size would suggest. Many found nowhere else. In just one example presented at the forum, the *Experimental Biodiversity-Based Tourism Estimates for South Africa*, released by Stats SA in July 2024, show that biodiversity directly contributed R27 billion, and more than 90 000 jobs, to South Africa's tourism sector in 2019. Natural capital is not always measured in monetary terms. Recent accounts produced for South Africa, like the 'Accounts for Protected Area' and 'Accounts for Strategic Water Source Areas' or 'Sub-national Water Resource Accounts', use physical measurements like hectares of land protected, number of people living in strategic water source areas or volume of water available for utilisation. The 'Protected Area Accounts' showed that the closing stock of protected areas in 2020 was 11 280 684 ha or 9,2% of South Africa. The 'Accounts for Strategic

Water Source Areas' revealed how important the provinces of KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga, Eastern and Western Cape are for water security.

Lately, biodiversity loss is being taken more seriously by corporate and financial institutions. An informative panel discussion featuring representatives from the South African Reserve Bank, Nedbank, the Banking Association of South Africa, and the African Natural Capital Alliance highlighted the mounting awareness. The panellists agreed that while climate change has been an earlier focus for business, the next few years will see a major shift as biodiversity is taken into account. Natural Capital Accounting will help to make sure that these efforts are genuine and backed up by evidence to avoid greenwashing.

A recent study by the French Development Agency revealed that 70% of household consumption in South Africa, and 80% of exports, are highly dependent on at least one ecosystem service. What this means, in the words of one of the panellists, is that "*biodiversity loss is a potential risk to the financial stability of the country*". In response, companies are increasingly adopting the recommendations of the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD) to assess their reliance on nature and potential risks from biodiversity loss.

South Africa assumes the presidency of the G20 in 2025. According to the *Nature* paper, G20 countries now hold around 68% of the world's natural capital, but rapidly increasing wealth in these countries contributes to biodiversity loss and global inequality. Brazil began the Global BioEconomy Initiative during its current presidency of the G20, to increase access to biodiversity and climate funding.



Above: From left to right: Director at SANBI Ms Aimee Ginsburg, DFFE DDG Ms Flora Mokgohloa, DFFE Acting Director Ms Mukondi Matshusa, Project Leader at SANBI Ms Jenifer Zungu, Intern at Stats SA Ms Boitshupo Sechogela, GIS Specialist at SANBI Ms Nokuthula Mahlangu and Chief Director at Stats SA Bokang Ms Vumbukani-Lepolesa

Minister gets to know DFFE employees

Photos by Veronica Mahlaba, Tshegofatso Ndhlovu and Dimpho Matlanato

Dr Dion George was appointed by President Cyril Ramaphosa as the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment from 3 July 2024. As part of getting to know the employees of the Department, he has embarked on walkabouts to introduce himself and get to know the work that is done by different sections at the Environment House, in Pretoria.



Above: Minister Dr Dion George familiarising himself with Environment House during his walkabout. He is accompanied by Chief Director: Communications and Advocacy, Mr Peter Mbelengwa.



Above: Chief Director: Financial Services, Ms Veronica Steyn along with Mr Moris Mohlala and Ms Florence Moropa explained to Minister George the important work that they do within the Financial Management Services Branch.



Above: Minister George gives a big thumbs up to DFFE mascot Billy Bin.



Above: Ms Renira Boodhraj from the Directorate: International Governance Management, responsible for North-South country bilateral cooperation, briefly tells the Minister about the mobilisation of resources from multilateral and bilateral donors.



Above: Minister George with Deputy Director: Logistics Management, Mr William Sekgatja who was happy to have a conversation with the Minister.



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Deputy Minister Narend Singh Champions Aquaculture Growth at AASA Conference



Above: During the 15th Aquaculture Association of Southern Africa Conference, Deputy Minister Narend Singh emphasised South Africa's commitment to fostering aquaculture partnerships across Africa. He highlighted the sector's rapid growth, noting that Africa's aquaculture expansion surpasses global averages, with growth rates of up to 23% in some regions. Singh stressed the importance of developing technologies tailored to the African environment, focusing on sustainable feed production, animal health, and climate resilience. He also underlined the value of collaboration across borders, with South Africa working closely with partners in the African Union, SADC, and international entities to drive innovation and sustainability in aquaculture. By Paul Sigutya.

Powering Partnerships for Conservation

The Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment together with The Global Environment Facility, and the United Nations Trade and Development hosted the Voluntary Sustainability Standards workshop in Pretoria on 19 – 20 August 2024. The workshop focused on advancing private-public partnerships to mainstream biodiversity conservation and sustainable use in Biodiversity Economy. Voluntary Sustainability Standards are norms and standards that ensure products are harvested, produced, processed or transported in accordance with certain sustainability metrics such as environmental impact, human rights, labour standards and gender equality. Delivering her opening remarks, Deputy Director-General for Biodiversity and Conservation, Ms Flora Mokgohloa stated that biodiversity economy in South Africa is a significant contributor to the economy and plays a crucial role in biodiversity conservation efforts. DDG Mokgohloa went on to add that the workshop is important in the implementation of the biodiversity charter.



"Our gathering here today is not only aimed at gaining and exchanging lessons but is aimed at enhancing our common shared goals for effectively implementing the proposed charter across biodiversity value chains in South Africa," said DDG Mokgohloa. **By Tshegofatso Ndhlovu.**

DFFE brings Madiba magic to Govan Mbeki Primary School

By Dimpho Matlanato

In the words of the late iconic Nelson Mandela, "We cannot afford to wait for others to stand up for our environment – as nobody stands to lose more than we do. It is our duty to be proactive in the battle to protect Africa's natural environment."

Tata Nelson Mandela held numerous titles throughout his life. Including revolutionary anti-apartheid activist, philanthropist, human rights activist, and the first black president of South Africa who went through 27 years in prison for his efforts to bring harmony and equality to South Africa.

To celebrate his birthday on 18 July, the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment partnered with the City of Johannesburg and Coca-Cola Beverages South Africa to host Nelson Mandela Day convened under the theme: **It Is In Your Hands**, to highlight the power of individual action on 18 July 2024 at Govan Mbeki Primary School in Orange Farm, Gauteng.

In an effort to spread the Madiba magic, the Department continued former President Nelson Mandela's mission to serve the community by handing over garden tools, seedlings and eight waste bins. Receiving the donations, the Principal of Govan Mbeki Primary School, Ms Michael Kele expressed her gratitude for the visit and all the help the school received.

"This is overwhelming in the sense that obviously this is a great day because we are remembering Tata Madiba. It was important for us to be part of this celebration. Mandela Day reminds us of the power of

collective effort and giving back to our communities.

We are proud to have national government, municipality, private sector and community members from all walks of life join hands to make a difference, displaying the true spirit of Ubuntu of bringing smiles and support to these young learners here at Govan Mbeki Primary School," she said.

"We are currently busy growing a food garden in the school, with these donations we will be able to complete our mission and supply our learners she added.

In addition to the donations, the DFFE partnered with the community of Orange Farm, City of Johannesburg and Coca-Cola Beverages South Africa in a 67 minutes community clean-up campaign reminding residents of Orange Farm about the necessity of proper waste management.



Above: Community members participating in a clean-up initiative to honour Mandela's legacy.



Above: Billy Bin with Govan Mbeki Primary School Principal Ms Michael Kele and learners as they receive garden tools for Nelson Mandela Day.

Kruger National Park honours Rangers

By Veronica Mahlaba



Above: Deputy Minister Swarts said rangers are a community of women and men that continuously put their lives at risk and remain at the forefront of conservation.



Above: DFFE Minister Bernice Swarts and CEO of SANParks, Ms Hapiloe Sello laid a wreath at the Ranger Memorial to honour rangers that were killed and injured in the line of duty.

This year's World Ranger Day was commemorated at the Rangers Memorial in Kruger National Park, led by the South African National Parks (SANParks) and Deputy Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE), Ms Bernice Swarts. World Ranger Day is observed annually on the 31 July to honour rangers killed or injured in the line of duty and celebrates the work rangers do to protect our natural and cultural treasures.

The international 2024 World Ranger Day theme is **30 by 30** which aims to draw attention to the direct and tangible actions that rangers take every day to reach our global 30 by 30 targets, as set out by the Convention on Biological Diversity at the 2022 United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (COP15), where a Global Biodiversity Framework was agreed upon by world leaders and decision-makers. Consistent with this international theme, at SANParks observed the day under the theme: **Rangers Are Custodians of Our Heritage**.

Deputy Minister Swarts explained that World Ranger Day provides an opportunity to reflect on the exceptional work carried out by rangers, which is a community of women and men that continuously put their lives at risk and remain at the forefront of conservation. The day also gives recognition and full respect to those rangers that lost their lives in the preceding year and acknowledges the many growing challenges and threats to rangers globally. "This group of fellow citizens are the hope for the present and future of our planet-mother earth. These are beacons of environmental stewardship, inspiring the world with innovative conservation practices," Minister Swarts explained.

While delivering her message of thanks, the CEO of

SANParks, Ms Hapiloe Sello expressed that they see and acknowledge the work by all the rangers in various national parks. "We might not tell you every day how wonderful you are, but you have to know that we carry you with us everywhere we are. You are highly appreciated."

Ms Sello further expressed that stakeholder management is one of the key deliverables at SANParks, and the successes in the review on this front cannot be realised if there is no valuable interaction with anyone.

"It is for this reason that I would like to pay special gratitude to the Honorary Rangers as well as the South African National Defense Force, the South African Police Services, other law enforcement agencies as well as community and business leaders. For us you are one with SANParks. You enable us in so many ways to fulfill our mandate. Thank you kindly," said Ms Sello.



Above: The rangers conducted drills to celebrate the extensive and selfless work done by rangers.

Deputy Minister Swarts leads Arbor Month launch

By Tshegofatso Ndhlovu



Above: Deputy Minister Bernice Swarts donated 80 fruit trees to the City of Tshwane to aid in the greening of their parks.



Above: Deputy Minister Bernice Swarts named the tree that she planted at Kalafong Park in Atteridgeville, "Resilience".

"Celebrating 30 years of Freedom: Promoting environmental conservation and sustainable forest management" was the theme of the day on 8 September 2024 as Deputy Minister for DFFE, Ms Bernice Swarts launched the 2024 National Arbor Month campaign at the Freedom Park Heritage Site in Tshwane.

Arbor Month in South Africa was officially adopted in the year 1983 when the first celebration of the day took place. The importance of trees in our country has seen the campaign grow to where it is now, where we celebrate National Arbor Month annually between 1 - 30 September.

Speaking about this year's theme Deputy Minister Bernice Swarts says that the 2024 theme seeks to show the importance of trees and forests in our every day lives.

"While the 2024 theme celebrates the liberation of our country, it also aims to highlight some key areas of forestry and tree planting in terms of their role in creating heritage wealth and sustaining healthy and resilient communities, through health benefits that are derived in forests including nutritious foods, medicine and rituals, fresh air, clean water and a place for recreation with one of the most important roles of forests being the mitigation of climate change," Said Deputy Minister Swarts.

Deputy Minister Swarts was joined by the MEC for Environment in Gauteng, Ms Sheila Peters and Member of the Mayoral Council for Finance in the City of Tshwane, Cllr Jacqui Uys in planting trees in several locations in Tshwane namely Kalafong

Park in Atteridgeville, Fountains Valley Resort in the Groenkloof Nature Reserve and Freedom park at the site earmarked as the Forest of Freedom in honour of the heroes and heroines who contributed to South Africa's liberation struggle in honouring the 30 years of democracy and freedom.

Representing the Gauteng provincial government, MEC for Environment, Ms Sheila Mary Peters said she believes that community involvement is of paramount importance in achieving the goal of planting as many trees as possible.

"The goal is to plant as many trees as possible per day and if it were up to me, I would say we should be planting a million trees per day and I know very well that is a huge number and that it is a tough task hence we have to involve community members and work hand in hand with them in order to be able to plant such a number of trees," said MEC Sheila Peters.

In her closing remarks Deputy Minister Swarts said DFFE aims to plant 3500 trees at various parks within the City of Tshwane by the end of the National Arbor Month Campaign. The planting of these trees will seek to highlight the Ten Million Trees Programme, announced by the President of the Republic of South Africa, Honourable Cyril Ramaphosa.



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.

Minister George launches SANParks Week

By Veronica Mahlaba



Above: Minister Dr Dion George with the executives from SANParks and representatives from the official sponsors, First National Bank and Total Energies who make South African National Parks Week a possibility.

Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, Dr Dion George officially launched the South African Parks Week on 08 September 2024 at Marakele National Park in Limpopo under the theme: **Own Your National Park**. The Week grants visitors a chance to have free access to national parks from 09 - 15 September 2024.

Speaking at the launch, Minister Dr George said the launch of the 19th annual South African National Parks Week forms a crucial element of government objective across the continent to better connect people with the natural heritage that belongs to us all.

"This year's theme, **Own Your National Parks**, is a call to action. It is an invitation to visit one of our national parks and an opportunity to embrace these parks as our own. To see them not just as the picturesque landscapes that they are, but as living, breathing parts of our heritage, our culture, and the legacy we leave behind. These parks belong to each one of us, and it is our collective responsibility to protect and preserve them for the generations to come," said the Minister.

Dr George further elaborated that as we reflect on the importance of National Parks Week and our shared responsibility, it is equally important to look ahead. That our vision for South Africa's national parks cannot be limited to conservation, it must ex-

tend to revitalisation and growth. He mentioned the new Kruger, Kirstenbosch-iSimangaliso Icon Status Strategy, also known as KISS. KISS is a bold initiative designed to elevate our parks, botanical gardens, and marine protected areas to world-renowned tourism destinations.

"Through KISS, we will transform these national treasures into economic powerhouses for our country. By enhancing visitor experiences and employing innovative management practices, we will ensure that our parks do more than conserve our natural and cultural heritage. They will also serve as meaningful contributors to an inclusive, green economy in which everyone can participate and benefit," Minister Dr George stated.

Every year South African National Parks (SANParks) aims to increase the number of citizens who are granted free access to national parks during this time. Since the start of the programme, some 785,621 South Africans have been afforded the opportunity to enter national parks. The objective is to see these numbers grow every year. Everyone over the age of 18 is required to bring an identity document to gain free access. Children under 18 are not required to bring an identity documents but should be accompanied by an adult.

South Africa presides over a network of 21 national parks. Each of which is managed by SANParks in six provinces.

22 September is **WORLD RHINO DAY**

Building a Future for Rhinos



“22 September is a celebration, commemoration and marking of World Rhino Day, a day where we shine a light on the beautiful animal that is the Rhino while bringing attention to the need to protect and preserve them from the inhumane act that is poaching,”- Deputy Minister Narend Sing during World Rhino Day in Hluhluwe Imfolozi Park, KwaZulu-Natal.

To learn more about rhino conservation, visit www.dffe.gov.za

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Minister George welcomes the sentencing of poaching kingpin

The Minister of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment, Dr Dion George, welcomes the recent sentencing of a notorious poaching kingpin by a Mozambican court. The individual, known as Simon Ernesto Valoi, or "Navara," has been sentenced to 27 years in prison for his role in leading a rhino-poaching syndicate. His accomplice, Paulo Zukula, has also been handed a 24-year sentence.

Valoi, who hails from Massingir, a district near the border adjacent to the Kruger National Park, has long been a significant figure in the illegal poaching industry, targeting South Africa's precious rhino population. The Mozambican court found him guilty of multiple serious crimes, including financing terrorism, poaching, and money laundering, among others. These crimes have caused immeasurable damage to our natural heritage and have posed significant threats to both wildlife and the safety of those dedicated to protecting it.

Minister George applauds the efforts of Mozambican authorities, the National Criminal Investigation Service (SERNIC), and the Wildlife Justice Commission, whose coordinated intelligence operation led to the apprehension and successful prosecution of Valoi and his accomplices. This sentencing is a critical victory in the ongoing fight against poaching and organised wildlife crime.

"The sentencing of Simon Ernesto Valoi and Paulo Zukula sends a powerful message that those who engage in the destruction of our natural resources will face the full force of the law," said Minister George. "We remain committed to working with our international partners to protect our wildlife and ensure that those responsible for such heinous crimes are brought to justice."

Minister George further urges all South Africans to be vigilant and to report any suspected environmental crimes to the authorities. "Communities play a vital role in the fight against poaching, and by working together with law enforcement agencies, we can make significant strides in safeguarding our environment for future generations," he added.



Above: Simon Ernesto Valoi, widely known by his nickname 'Navara', and an associate, Paulo Zukula, were caught in possession of eight rhino horn.



**We should
always protect our
forests by using trees
sustainably!**



Wood is used to make things that people need, such as furniture. This can be sold to make money.

THE ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE OF TREES

**There
are many
ways to make
money from
trees.**



Some people use certain plants to stay healthy. These plants can be harvested and sold as medicine.



People can make timber poles and sell them for building things like houses, fences and telephone lines.



People can collect and sell forest products like extra firewood, handpicked fruits or handcrafted wooden items.



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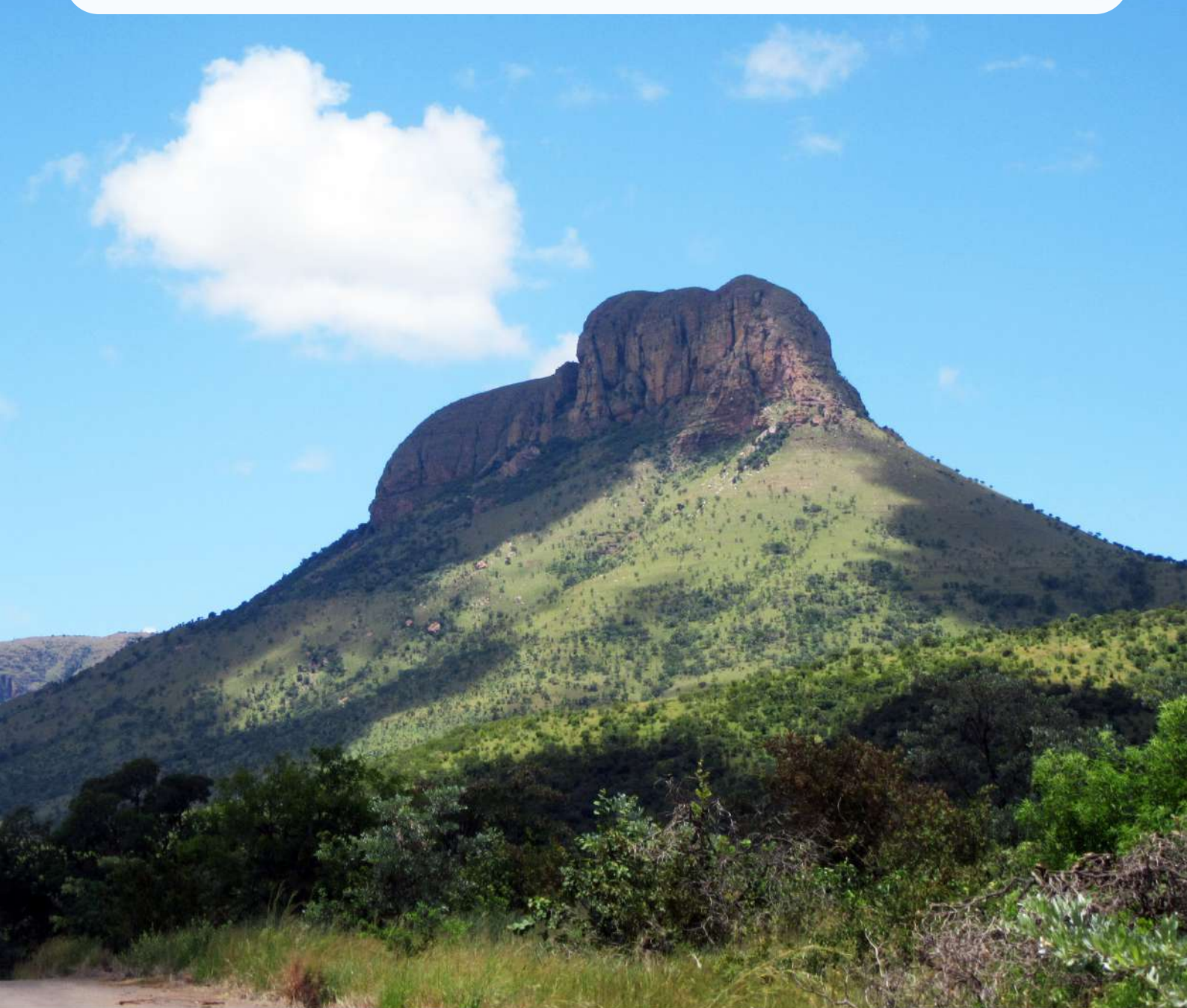
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