

Environment Quarterly

Kwartaalike Omgewingsverslag

Tikologo ka Kotara

Mupo nga Kotara



Buchu Agreement makes history

**Minister leads fight against
illegal dumping hotspots**



forestry, fisheries
& the environment

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



Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment

2023

January

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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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About the back cover image:

Woodcliffe Farm, Maclear

Maclear, officially Nqanqarhu, is a small town situated in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa, near the Mooi River, 172 km north of East London and 80 km northeast of Elliot. It lies just north-east of Ugie. The land to the east and south was part of the former homeland of Transkei.



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



Editorial: Keep the green lights on



Dear Valued Stakeholder,

Hello and welcome to yet another insightful edition of your favourite environmental magazine, the Environment Quarterly.

As we wind up the year, we always reflect on past events taking in the lessons for future improvement on our highest marks. The year-end is also a fantastic time where friends

and families celebrate after a long year so it's very important that we always remember our responsibility to the environment: To keep it clean and minimise any possible harm.

Speaking of responsibility, during National Parks Week, our Minister reminded all of us, particularly senior citizens, of their unlimited access to our beautiful national parks in the country. Senior citizens use the country's national parks for free and are encouraged to spend their days and time in the loving hands of nature.

In September, I had the absolute pleasure of accompanying the Deputy Minister and her team on yet another one of their green-keeping efforts in the province of Limpopo, the City of Polokwane to be particular, for the launch of Arbor Month and of course, crowning the cleanest city in the country.

Polokwane has a track record of scooping the Greenest Municipality Awards and has planted more than a thousand trees this year alone towards President Ramaphosa's call for the country to plant Ten

Million Trees which contributes to cleaner air, food production and indigenous medicine to cure diseases.

On Page 8, you can read about young people from the Waterberg District in Limpopo who are actively taking a stand against rhino poaching and ensuring that future generations do not only read about the rhino horn but that they see it.

I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome the appointment of the Department's new Chief Director for Communications, Mr Peter Mbelengwa, who took office in October. We hope and trust that his extensive experience in media and expert leadership skills will continue to steer this ship in the right direction.

'Till next time, let your green light shine!

Editor

Erica

Meet our team

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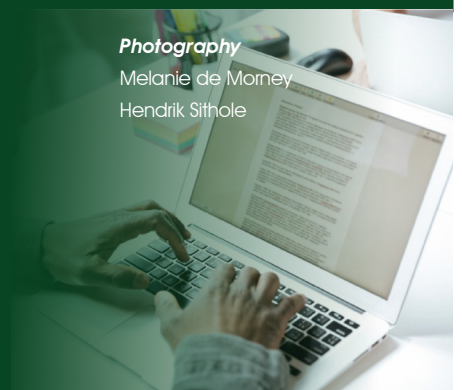
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Enviro Events

Minister launches Cleaning and Greening Programme



Above: Minister Barbara Creecy launched the Municipal Cleaning and Greening Initiative in Gqeberha, with the target of clearing illegal dumping hotspots across the country. Minister Creecy visited the Old Apostolic Church and led the cleanup of an illegal dumping site joined by members of the EPWP. Following the cleanup of the illegal dumping site, the minister planted indigenous and fruit trees joined by the Mayor of Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality in the rehabilitated park. **By Sinethemba Gunqa**

Hoopstad women share 1 000 inspiring stories



Above: Women in the Tikwana community in Hoopstad, Free State were part of the #1000Stories and #100000Trees conversation initiated by a non-government organisation called She Evolves on 08 August 2023. Deputy Minister Makhotso Sotyú launched the initiative as part of Women's Day celebrations with the Executive Mayor of Lejweleputswa District Municipality, Cllr Veronica Ntakumbana and the Mayor of Tswelopele Local Municipality, Cllr Kenalemang Phukuntsi. Mrs Universe South Africa, Patricia Tshitema shared her story as a guest speaker to inspire the women to share their gifts and talents to uplift others and the community at large in Hoopstad. **By Veronica Mahlaba**

Investment portal capacity building workshop



Above: The Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE), and the Department of Small Business Development (DSBD) hosted the Biodiversity Economy Investment Portal Capacity Building workshop. The purpose of the workshop was to facilitate the process of documentation development and project inclusion into the Investment Portal while assisting emerging SMMES with harnessing the benefits of the Investment Portal.

The Biodiversity Economy Investment Portal was developed by the DFFE with the help of the United Nations Development Programme – the Biodiversity Finance Initiative, as a finance solution.

By Evens Masemola

SA-China climate knowledge exchange



Above: Scores of government officials and climate change experts showed up for the climate change training workshop held on 24 July 2023, in Pretoria, to learn more about China's latest policy and action on climate change. The training was aimed at providing SA's government officials and experts with a comprehensive and systematic understanding of China's experience in addressing climate change.

By Zibuse Ndlovu

Buchu Agreement makes history

By Veronica Mahlaba



Above: It was all smiles at the signing of the Buchu Agreement by the National Khoisan Council, the South African San Council and the Buchu industry.

History was made at the first African Biotrade Festival (ABF) when the Buchu Agreement was signed by the National Khoisan Council, South African San Council and the Buchu industry at the Sandton Convention Centre. This gives the councils a legal right to a fair share of the benefits that result from the profitable development of the buchu plant.

Scores of people attended the three-day ABF, which was jointly arranged by the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, ABioSA and the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition from 14 – 16 September 2023. The event created a platform to discuss and address biotrade challenges and opportunities, with an emphasis on market access, building business support networks, and creating linkages within the wider biotrade ecosystem.

Regarding the signing of the Buchu Agreement, the South African San Council Chairman, Mr Collin Louw admitted that it is a dream realised to have the agreement finalised. "It took us years and a lot of work to reach this point where everyone is satisfied with what is contained in the agreement. We would like to profusely thank the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment for being with us from the beginning and holding our hand throughout this whole process and ensuring that this agreement does happen," said Mr. Louw.



Above: The DFFE assisted in facilitating the development of the Buchu Agreement between the parties concerned until its finalisation. Representing the Department is Chief Director: Biodiversity Economy and Sustainable Use, Mr Khorommbi Matibe (Back row: 5th from left).



Above: Stakeholders that attended the ABF included investors, researchers, buyers and innovators from the food, fragrance, flavours, ingredients, and cosmetics sectors.



Above: During his keynote address at the official opening, then Acting Deputy Director-General: Biodiversity and Conservation, Mr Sydney Nkosi explained the consistent evidence that exists that Biotrade business models can increase private sector involvement in the field of biodiversity conservation. "Biotrade has the potential to be a key-pulling factor in addressing other emerging global environmental and poverty reduction challenges."



Above: The Director for the United Nations Development Programme GEF-6 Ms Preshanthie Naicker was the facilitator for a panel discussion on BioPANZA's 5 clusters — Sustainable Supply, Innovation, Finance, Policy and Market Access at the festival.



Above: DFFE's Biodiversity Officer, Ms Katedi Mantsho and Agricultural Research Council's Ms Bongi Sokwaliwa (seen in a red top) during a Honeybush Tea Tasting event organised by the Department. Attendees were pleasantly surprised by the various flavour options that they were able to taste as well as receiving valuable information on the benefits of honeybush tea.



Above: Department officials share information with visitors and other exhibitors about the benefits of rooibos and honeybush tea.



Above: Visitors flocked to the department's rooibos & honeybush tea tasting exhibition stand with the Rooibos Council giving away hundreds of rooibos packets for visitors to take home for their enjoyment.



Above: The African Biotrade Festival promoted networking amongst investors and innovators with an emphasis on market access, building business support networks, and linkages within the biotrade ecosystem.



Above: The AFB showcased Africa's biodiversity endowment and indigenous plant resources. It created an enabling environment for buyers, SMMEs and communities.



About the contributor: Veronica Mahlaba

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

Senior citizens encouraged to visit National Parks

By Zibuse Ndlovu



Above: Minister Barbara Creecy addressing the media during the launch of the SA National Parks Week.

Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, Ms Barbara Creecy has urged the elderly to take advantage of the free access granted to the country's National Parks during SA National Parks Week. Minister Creecy was addressing the media in Pretoria during the launch of the SA National Parks Week which runs from 16 - 24 September 2023.

"Elderly people who have lived all their lives next to a National Park without ever seeing what is on the other side of the fence must be taken in their thousands to go and visit their neighbouring National Parks," said Minister Creecy.

The free access offered through the South African National Parks (SANParks) system is aimed at inspiring people to take pride in the country's cultural heritage while spending time in nature.

"National Parks Week is an ideal opportunity for us to introduce the majesty and beauty of the country's national parks to the people, especially to communities who seldom get to experience and

enjoy these areas of conservation, cultural heritage and biological diversity, right on their doorstep," said Minister Creecy.

Since the inception of the South African National Parks Week in 2006, more than 619 292 South Africans, who may not have otherwise had an opportunity to visit a national park, have participated. "I am pleased to note that National Parks Week has gripped the imagination of some of our provincial conservation authorities, with the Limpopo Tourism Agency and North West Province Tourism and Parks Board joining to host Mahala Week where select game reserves in the provinces are offering free access as well," Creecy said.

The Minister said conservation and the protection of the country's rich biodiversity is a commitment that must be achieved, especially as government works towards expanding the conservation estate to meet international commitments and work to protect the natural world in a sustainable way for current and future generations.

Minister Creecy said R273 million has been spent on 863 Small, Medium and Micro enterprises (SMMEs) through the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), creating more than 5 364 full-time equivalent work opportunities in communities where there is little other formal employment.

“Every day, an average of 7 500 individuals employed by the EPWP enter our national parks and do crucial work such as land rehabilitation, cleaning of beaches, support of rangers and infrastructure maintenance,” said Minister Creecy.



Minister Creecy said R273 million has been spent on 863 Small, Medium and Micro enterprises (SMMEs) through the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), creating more than 5 364 full-time equivalent work opportunities in communities where there is little other formal employment



Above: Minister Creecy with the eNCA reporter, Mr Theodore Mashele who won an all-expenses paid trip to a national park of his choice, with a partner. At the launch of the SA National Parks Week at Augrabies National Park in the Northern Cape last year. Minister Creecy invited members of the media in attendance to submit an exceptional story about national parks, and Mashele was one of those who submitted his story.



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.

UN expert on toxins visits South Africa

By Peter Mbelengwa and Zibuse Ndlovu



Above: Minister Barbara Creecy, and UN Special Rapporteur, Dr Marcos Orellana meet during Dr Orellana's visit to South Africa.

The Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, Ms Barbara Creecy, has commended Dr Marcos Orellana, UN Special Rapporteur on Toxins and Human Rights, on his successful visit to South Africa from 31 July – 11 August 2023. Welcoming the outcome of Dr Orellana's visit, Minister Creecy urged the United Nations to support South Africa's journey from environmental racism to sustainable development and realisation of the human rights contained in Section 24 of the Constitution.

"We look forward to the outcome of the report and hope that the Special Rapporteur will continue to support South Africa in its quest to improve environmental management and the realisation of environmental rights," said Minister Creecy.

The Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) had arranged for Dr Orellana to hold widespread discussions on the problem of chemicals and hazardous waste with government, business, civil society and organised labour. Dr Orellana also conducted site visits.

The Minister emphasised the importance for developing countries to receive technological transfer, technical assistance, and financial assistance to make a safe environment a reality. "Rapid urbanisation, industrialisation and immigration, combined with fiscal challenges, have negatively impacted on government's

ability to effectively manage environmental challenges," the Minister said. The Special Rapporteur noted that the South African Constitution is renowned worldwide for its advanced positions on human rights. For example, the Constitution recognises the justiciable right of everyone to an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being. He pointed out that it took the UN General Assembly another 25 years to globally recognise the critical importance of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

"The challenges to overcoming the legacy of environmental racism are enormous, and they are compounded by structural inequality, widespread poverty, unemployment, and new environmental threats such as hazardous synthetic chemicals and the climate emergency," said Dr Marcos Orellana.

The special rapporteur is part of the Special Procedures mechanism of the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC). They are appointed by the UNHRC on the basis of their expertise and experience in the area of their mandate, personal integrity, independence, impartiality, and objectivity. They are not employed by the UN and do not receive remuneration for their work. The mandate seeks to help states, businesses, and other stakeholders to adopt solutions with regard to the impact of harmful substances on human rights.

Youth take a stand against poaching

By Dimpho Matlanato



Above: Over 100 learners from 62 schools in Waterberg District Municipality in Limpopo taking part in the school competition.

Above: Ms Tloubatla Kgaugelo with her school mate Mr Kwebane Rhlani on stage sharing their presentation on the conservation of the rhino.

To increase rhino conservation efforts and celebrate World Rhino Day, over 100 of learners from 62 schools participated in an oral and poster school competition hosted by the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE), in collaboration with Lapalala Wilderness School, Limpopo Department of Economic Development, Environment and Tourism, Waterberg Biosphere Reserve, and Endangered Wildlife Trust.

Addressing the learners, the Chief Director for Biodiversity Economy and Sustainable Use, Mr Khorombi Matibe said the fight for rhino conservation should not only be the function of government but rather a collaborative effort. "It is crucial for us to come together and protect these incredible rhino species. I want to urge communities and learners to take a stand against this heinous crime as you are all critical advocates for rhino conservation," he said.

While the competition was heated, the resounding message from the learners was that preserving the rhino horn was important to them because they didn't want future generations to read about rhinos and not see them, as they do with dinosaurs.

At the end of the competition, learners received prizes such as cash vouchers, laptops and printer machines,

among other things. Matric student at Lemetja Secondary School in Dipere Village in Limpopo, Ms Emelda Kgolofelo Raseebana was the competition's grand prize winner, receiving a bursary to further her studies in any field of environmental studies.

Sharing her excitement, Emelda thanked the Department and shared her future plans. "I cannot believe I was awarded the bursary. My dream has always been to study veterinary science and with this bursary, I plan to study hard and reach my goal. I am thankful to the Department for giving me this opportunity. I am now a step closer to realising all my dreams," she said.



Above: Bursary winner Ms Emelda Kgolofelo Raseebana who plans on studying veterinary science at either the University of Cape Town or the University of Johannesburg next year.



About the contributor: Dimpho Matlanato

Dimpho Matlanato is an intern in the Communications and Advocacy Chief Directorate. She holds a BA Degree in Journalism from the University of Johannesburg.

PPEs for participants

By Dimpho Matlanato and Veronica Mahlaba



Above: Deputy Minister Makhotso Sotyu alongside Free State MEC for Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Mr Ketso Makume; Executive Mayor of Lejweleputswa District Municipality, Cllr Veronica Ntakumbana; Mayor of Nala Local Municipality, Cllr Nozililo Ntema and DFFE Deputy Director-General: Environmental Programmes, Dr Nonhlanhla Mkhize with the in-house model participants.

To galvanise communities to act against littering and illegal dumping, the Deputy Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, Ms Makhotso Sotyu handed over Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to 700 in-house participants under Lejweleputswa District Municipality, which is led by Executive Mayor Veronica Ntakumbana on 25 August 2023 in Bothaville, Free State. They were joined by Free State MEC of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Mr Ketso Makume, and Mayor of Nala Local Municipality, Cllr Nozililo Ntema, to lead the Good Green Deeds clean-up and greening activity.

Speaking at the event, Deputy Minister Sotyu explained that her visit to the District was to hand over PPE to be used when implementing the cleaning and greening project by local municipalities under the District. "I am pleased to announce that we have recruited participants as part of the In-House Model to address service delivery and waste management in partnership with the Lejweleputswa District Municipality."

The Deputy Minister further highlighted that illegal dumping and littering were two of the most common problems in South Africa with ineffective waste management practices prevalent in many parts of the country. "This trend, unfortunately, affects the well-being of communities, as it has indeed resulted in the mushrooming of pockets of illegal dumping and littering sites. The small act of picking up a wrapper, paper, and plastic in your neighbourhood, could be the start of something amazing in our country," she went on to say.

To help green the area and as part of the Ten Million Trees Programme, the Deputy Minister and the mayors planted trees at different local houses and a church.

Executive Mayor of Lejweleputswa District Municipality, Cllr Veronica Ntakumbana expressed her gratitude to the Department. "We are grateful for this initiative. It will make a huge difference in the lives of the youth gathered here today, and the community at large as Bothaville will be clean and safe," she said.



Above: Mayor Ntema, Deputy Minister Sotyu, Executive Mayor Ntakumbana planted trees to green Bothaville as part of the Ten Million Trees Programme.



Above: Lejweleputswa District Municipality In-House Model Participants who are wearing their new PPE gear after doing a clean-up in Bothaville under Nala Local Municipality.

Scalable emission reduction by 2030

By Veronica Mahlaba



Above: Learners from different secondary schools in Polokwane were part of the opening of the Air Quality Lekgotla. They formed part of discussions on the case of air quality management and climate change. They were informed about different career paths to follow if interested in air quality management.

Chief Director: Air Quality Management and the National Air Quality Officer, Dr Patience Gwaze expressed that this year's Annual Air Quality Governance Lekgotla held from 04 – 06 September 2023 in Limpopo was to establish a platform to take forward the work of development and implementation of emission reduction and to engage tools and interventions required to support the implementation of the emission reduction objective.

"The Lekgotla will include focused compliance and enforcement effort, a functional atmospheric emission licencing regime as well a functional ambient air quality monitoring network that is able to provide meaningful management decisions, policy research and regulation implementation information," said Dr Gwaze.

The Annual Air Quality Governance Lekgotla is an annual event for intergovernmental coordination and cooperation for air quality management in the country. The Lekgotla provides a platform where government officials gather to discuss the progress made by all spheres of government regarding the implementation of the National Environmental Management: Air Quality Act, 2004 (Act No. 39 of 2004) (AQA)

Dr Gwaze further explained that: "It is an opportunity for government officials to share experiences, best practices and to agree on possible solutions in addressing common challenges faced by government in the air quality management field, hence continuous capacity building at the local authority for the effective implementation of the Air Quality Act."

The Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) in partnership with the Limpopo Department of Economic Development Environment and Tourism (LEDET) hosted an outreach event for secondary school learners at the Lekgotla venue. This was done

to commemorate Clean Air Day and advance the message for clean air for a healthy environment within communities. The two departments further visited New Look Primary School in Seshego, Polokwane to capacitate learners on air quality management issues, demonstrate the tools that air quality management professionals use and showcase environmental management as a career of choice.

MEC of Limpopo Economic Development, Environment and Tourism, Mr Rodgers Monama encouraged learners at New Look Primary School to keep the environment clean. "Today is International Day for Clean Air and Blue Skies. It is important that we look after the air. We are going to plant eight trees around the school to celebrate the day and to green the school. Trees are important as they give us oxygen and keep us alive," MEC Monama explained.

The Annual Air Quality Governance Lekgotla is an initiative of the DFFE, LEDET and the National Association for Clean Air.



Above: Limpopo MEC of Economic Development, Environment and Tourism, Mr Rodgers Monama, encouraged learners at New Look Primary School to keep the environment clean.

Leadership Profile: Mr Peter Mbelengwa

By Veronica Mahlaba



Above: Newly appointed Chief Director of Communications and Advocacy, Mr Peter Mbelengwa.

Recently, Minister Barbara Creecy announced the appointment of Mr Peter Mbelengwa as the Department's new Chief Director: Communications and Advocacy, and Departmental Spokesperson.

Minister Creecy explained that Mr Mbelengwa will play a crucial part in building and sustaining relationships with members of the media, communities as well as local and international stakeholders in the environment sector. He will also serve as the official spokesperson for the Department and the Ministry — an important responsibility in advocating for sustainable use of our natural resources.

"We are confident that with his academic qualifications, sound media relations skills and expertise in areas of strategic communication and stakeholder management, Mr Mbelengwa will seamlessly lead our communications efforts as we endeavour to build a society that lives in harmony with its environment," said Minister Creecy.

He holds a Bachelor of Arts in Communication Science from the University of South Africa and recently graduated with a Postgraduate Diploma in Business Administration from the Wits Business School. From Technikon Northern Gauteng (TUT) he obtained a National Diploma in Management of Training (Human Resource Development) and acquired a certificate in Public Relations at the Public Relations Institute of Southern Africa (PRISA).

Mr Mbelengwa has spent more than 20 years in government communications, having worked in multiple departments including the South African Police Service, City of Tshwane, the Department of International Relations and Cooperation, the Department of Arts and Culture, and the Ministry in the Presidency responsible for Women. "I joined the Department for the first time in 2010 as the Media Liaison Officer for the then Deputy Minister Rejoice Mabudafhasi under the Ministry of Water and Environmental Affairs. I left the Department in 2014 and rejoined the Department in 2017 as Director: External Communication, now known as Media Relations."

“

Mr Mbelengwa has spent more than 20 years in government communications, having worked in multiple departments including the South African Police Service, City of Tshwane, the Department of International Relations and Cooperation, the Department of Arts and Culture, and the Ministry in the Presidency responsible for Women

1. What drew your interest in the communication space?

I have always wanted to be in the broadcasting space since my childhood days. I was fortunate to realise that dream during my tertiary education years.

2. What drives your passion in the job you do in the department?

I am passionate about the advancement of a new deal between people and nature, and being a mouthpiece for ensuring that people live in harmony with nature.

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

A good leader is a team player. He forms an integral part in the advancement of the team's goals.

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

As a regular in this space, the work of the Department is litigious hence one needs to be always on guard in terms of what legislation stipulates on a myriad of issues. On the other hand, it is fulfilling to be part of the advocates of the treaties and legislations that seek to conserve, preserve, and protect the environment.

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

I am the vanguard of the environment. I am always in the frontline of defending good deeds for the benefit of the environment.

6. What do you consider to be your single greatest achievement in your career life thus far?

Being appointed to be both the Head of Communication and Spokesperson for the Department and Ministry of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment.

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

Time management is sacrosanct.

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

Never give up. It will make sense one day.

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

Perseverance is a virtue.

Quick facts

Home town: Louis Trichardt.

Role model: Nelson Mandela.

Favourite quote/motto: It will make sense one day.

Hobbies: Jogging and watching soccer (I am a die-hard supporter of Kaizer Chiefs FC).

I am currently reading: Nelson Mandela: Conversations with Myself.

Do you use Facebook or Twitter? I use both.



Minister limits fishing near African Penguin colonies

By Zibuse Ndlovu



Above: Competition for food is thought to be one among a set of pressures that are contributing to the decline of the African Penguin population. **Image:** DFFE Archives.

In a race to conserve the dwindling African Penguin population, the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, Ms Barbara Creecy has announced a 10-year ban on fishing near the African Penguin colonies.

Speaking during a virtual media briefing held on 4 August 2023, in Pretoria, Minister Creecy said competition for food is thought to be one among a set of pressures that are contributing to the decline of African Penguins, with other pressures including ship traffic with their associated noise and vibrations, pollution and degradation of suitable nesting habitats.

"The conservation sector and the fishery industry representatives for the east coast small pelagic fisheries reached an agreement on prioritising areas for penguin conservation around St. Croix Island and Bird Island in Algoa Bay," said Minister Creecy.

Conservation organisations represented by BirdlifeSA, World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the Endangered Wildlife Trust and scientists from Nelson Mandela University, together with lead representatives from the Eastern and Southern Cape Pelagic Association (ESCPA) have agreed to exclude fishing in 42,17% and 93% of core penguin foraging areas around St. Croix and Bird Islands respectively. The agreed areas will be implemented from 1 September 2023.

The penguin foraging areas in Algoa are characterised by relatively large ocean spaces. The report of the Expert Review Panel on fishing closures and limitations around key penguin colonies noted that the scientific evidence suggests that fish catches in closed areas will be more difficult to

replace around the St. Croix and Dyer islands. These are some of the local characteristics that had to be taken into consideration during these negotiations," said Minister Creecy.

The Report further recommended that penguin colony-specific discussions take place as each colony has unique fishery and ecological dynamics, including that fish catch dynamics and replaceability vary at different colonies.

Fishing limitations have been established for the following penguin colonies: Dassen Island, Robben Island, Stoney Point, Dyer Island, St. Croix Island and Bird Island. These are to be implemented for a minimum of 10 years with a review after six years of implementation and data collection. The transition to implementing fishing limitations started with continuing with the interim closures established in September 2022, while both the fishing industry and the conservation sector studied the Panel's Report.

"As announced upon the release of the Panel's Report, any consensus on fishing limitations, will be implemented as they are agreed. This agreement for St. Croix and Bird Islands is such an agreement," said Minister Creecy.

The Expert Review Panel was set up by the Minister Creecy in December 2022 to review all related science output over the last few years. The panel, which undertook the assessment from end of December 2022 and submitted its report in July 2023, is chaired by Professor Andre Punt (USA), with members Dr Ana Parma (Argentina), Dr Eva Plaganyi (Australia), Professor Philip Trathan (UK), Professor Robert Furness (UK) and Professor James Sanchirico (USA).



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South Africa will participate in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change 28th Conference of Parties (COP28) to be held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates from 30 November until 12 December 2023.



**Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment,
Ms Barbara Creecy**



**forestry, fisheries
& the environment**

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



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Enviro Focus

Our national parks and freshwater conservation

By Dirk Roux and Stef Freitag

South Africa's recent National Biodiversity Assessment (NBA 2019) highlights the dire and deteriorating state of most aquatic ecosystems - rivers, wetlands and estuaries. We asked to what extent the SANParks estate, and individual national parks, contribute to conserving these ecosystems? This resulted in a two-year collaboration between SANParks, SANBI and CSIR and publication of its findings in 2023.

Rivers

The SANParks estate encompasses about 4% (around 6050 km) of total river length in the country, and represents 86 of 222 (39%) river ecosystem types in South Africa. Rivers in national parks are, on average, in better ecological condition than outside of parks, with 63% of river length inside parks in a natural or near-natural ecological condition compared to 25% outside parks. Four national parks host 11 of South Africa's 62 remaining free-flowing (un-dammed) rivers, namely Garden Route (6), Kruger (3), Table Mountain (1) and the proposed Grasslands National Park (1). These include three so-called 'flagship' free-flowing rivers, namely Mutale River in Kruger, Groot River in Garden Route, and tributaries of the Kraai River within Grasslands National Parks.

Wetlands

Even though over half (72) of South Africa's 135 wetland ecosystem types occur in national parks, approximately 75% of the country's wetland ecosystem types are

both threatened and under-protected. This is because few wetland types have the target of 20% or more of their extent under protection and/or wetlands that are protected are not in good ecological condition (based on modelled data). In fact, modelled ecological condition data suggests that wetlands are in a similarly poor condition inside and outside the SANParks estate. To test this, basic field-based wetland inventories are being developed for selected parks, providing location, wetland type and ecological condition data.



Above. Effective governance of estuaries involve dialogue and collaboration with diverse stakeholder groups who care to make a difference, as here with a group of fishers of Knysna Estuary.

Estuaries

South Africa has 290 estuaries and 42 micro-estuaries. These highly productive ecosystems comprise less than 2% of the country's territory but contribute R4.2 billion



per annum to our economy. This is the most threatened of all realms in South Africa, with only 18% of estuarine ecosystem types and 1% of the total estuarine area considered well protected. Nevertheless, most of the 22 estuaries that fall within or overlap with SANParks' estate are in a natural to near-natural ecological state, reflecting the higher protection level achieved through inclusion in a national park. Estuaries are prime examples of multiple-use common-pool resources, facing an array of pressures from surrounding uses of land, freshwater, coastal and marine ecosystems. Therefore, management and conservation of estuaries requires very clear definition, and execution, of roles and responsibility of all mandated and/or co-governing agencies.

Strategic Water Source Areas (SWSAs)

These areas represent approximately 10% of South Africa's land area and provides 50% of its water – hence making a critical contribution to water security. However, only 9% of SWSAs are formally protected, with national parks contributing a mere 2% towards the total area. This includes the contribution of the proposed Grasslands National Park, which by itself covers almost the same extent of SWSAs as the other national parks combined.



Above: This waterfall on the Batlokwa Communal land near the Lesotho border, Eastern Cape, is one of many spectacular waterfalls to be found in the new proposed Grasslands National Park. © Melanie de Morney

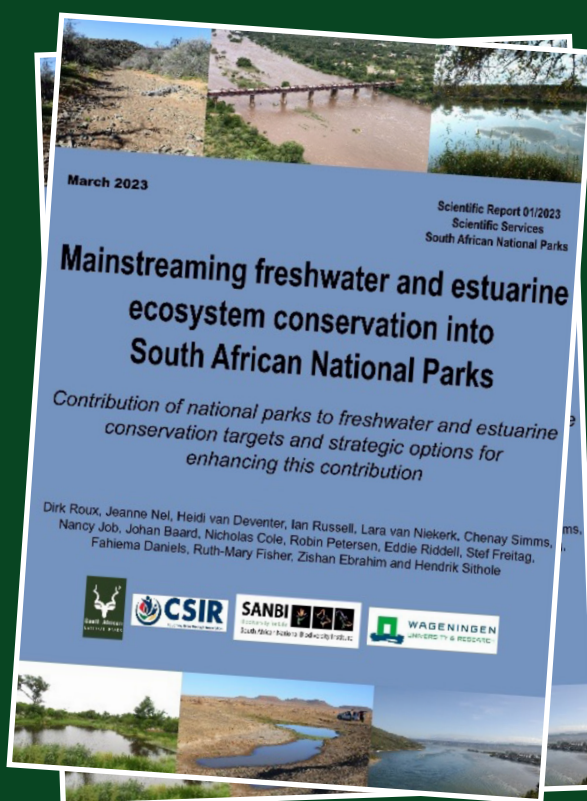
Conclusion and recommendations

Global and national conservation targets for aquatic ecosystems cannot be achieved by national parks, or even all of South Africa's protected areas, alone. Furthermore, conservation of aquatic ecosystems is inherently challenging as they are highly connected to upstream and surrounding land areas, have high direct utility value for humans, are generally heavily used, and require cooperative action across administrative boundaries. However, national parks and other protected areas provide a cornerstone for the conservation of these threatened ecosystems. Recommendations on how park planning, park management, research and monitoring functions can help to optimise SANParks' contribution to aquatic ecosystem conservation in South Africa include to:

- Plan towards incorporating whole catchments, free-flowing rivers, Strategic Water Source Areas and/or estuaries into existing or new national parks;

- Improve or avoid further decline in ecological condition of aquatic systems in parks by maintaining or restoring hydrological connectivity along freshwater systems or between connected freshwater, groundwater, estuarine and terrestrial systems and avoid further development in sensitive riparian, wetland or estuarine zones;
- Develop basic wetland inventories for all parks;
- Ensure that achievable actions for all co-governing or co-managing agencies are included in Estuary Management Plans under development;
- Enable systematic and sustained monitoring of the diverse aquatic systems in SANParks' custodianship;
- Promote, attract and enable research to enhance understanding and appreciation of aquatic systems;
- Pursue collaborative management and/or co-governance of those aquatic systems not fully contained within parks and/or where external influences on their functioning are dependent on cooperation.

Report citation: Roux DJ, Nel JL, Van Deventer H, Russell I, Van Niekerk L, Simms C, Job N, Baard J, Cole N, Petersen R, Riddell E, Freitag S, Daniels F, Fisher RC, Ebrahim Z, Sithole H. 2023. Mainstreaming freshwater and estuarine ecosystem conservation into South African National Parks: contribution of national parks to freshwater and estuarine conservation targets and strategic options for enhancing this contribution. Scientific Report 01 / 2023, South African National Parks, Skukuza.



Melanie de Mornay, fauna biotechnician, admiring the view on the way to the sample site on Woodcliff Farm near Maclear. (Image by Hendrik Sithole)

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