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Economic Development, Environment,
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REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



NORTH WEST PROVINCE PROTECTED AREA EXPANSION STRATEGY

2025-2030

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NORTH WEST PROVINCE

PROTECTED AREA EXPANSION STRATEGY

2025-2030



The development of the North West Protected Area Expansion Strategy is a provincial plan that has been collaboratively developed with the inputs of multiple stakeholders from national, provincial and local government, together with members of civil society and the private sector. The inputs made by these stakeholders provides the sound strategic basis and a broadly supported approach to protected area expansion in North West Province.

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- ▶ Bojanala Platinum District Municipality
- ▶ North West House of Traditional and Khoi-San Leaders (NWHTKL)

MEC FOREWORD



As the custodians of North West's natural heritage, we have a profound responsibility to protect the landscapes, ecosystems, and species that characterise our province. Our protected areas are more than just places of beauty and biodiversity—they are vital to our health, culture, economy, and climate resilience.

This North West Protected Area Expansion Strategy (PAES) outlines our government's vision and commitment to significantly expand and strengthen our system of protected and conserved areas. This strategy is grounded in science, guided by Indigenous knowledge and stewardship, and shaped by the voices of government and industry role players, communities and civil society across the province.

Our goals are ambitious but necessary. In the face of a rapidly changing climate and unprecedented biodiversity loss, protected area expansion aligned with South Africa's obligations set out in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework are imperative. Expanding protected areas will help drive sustainable rural economic development, secure clean water and air, conserve species and habitats, and provide sustainable livelihoods and recreational opportunities for generations to come.

We recognise that success depends on partnerships. Communities and landowners have long protected and cared for their natural resources, and their leadership is central to this strategy. We are committed to supporting

community-led conservation and ensuring that this work advances reconciliation and respects Indigenous rights and responsibilities.

This strategy reflects a whole-of-society approach. It invites collaboration across different spheres and mandates of government, communities and private landowners, environmental and conservation organisations, youth, and the business community. Together, we will chart a path toward a more resilient and nature-positive future.

Let this strategy serve as a roadmap for action—and a testament to our shared dedication to protecting what matters most.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bitsa Lenkopane', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Ms Bitsa Lenkopane

MEC for Economic Development, Environment, Conservation and Tourism, North West Province

HOD FOREWORD



The protection of our natural heritage is one of the most important responsibilities we hold as a department. As we confront the twin crises of biodiversity loss and climate change, the need to expand and strengthen our system of protected and conserved areas has never been more urgent.

This Protected Area Expansion Strategy (PAES) is embedded within South Africa and the North West province's policy environment and seeks to secure the natural resource base that underpins human livelihoods and wellbeing. It represents a decisive step toward meeting our conservation goals and sustaining the ecosystems that support life, livelihoods, and cultural identity. It provides a clear framework for identifying, prioritising, and securing new areas for protection, while enhancing the integrity and connectivity of existing sites. At its heart it seeks to adopt new approaches to biodiversity conservation emerging in South Africa through the White Paper on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity, which emphasises a uniquely South African approach to conservation, founded on the principles of Ubuntu. The strategy will be integral in the achievement of the North West Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2030 vision and objectives, in particular the objective to conserve and effectively manage biodiversity in the province.

This strategy is not just about numbers or boundaries—it is about people, partnerships, and place-based solutions. It is informed by the best available science and shaped through consultation and collaboration with a wide range of partners and stakeholders.

We are particularly proud to support and promote community-led conservation efforts as an essential part of this strategy. Recognising and respecting Indigenous rights, knowledge and leadership is key to both the success of this work and our broader commitment to reconciliation. Delivering on this strategy will require bold thinking, sustained investment, and coordinated action across all levels of government, civil society and the private sector. It will require innovation, collaboration, and a shared belief in the value of nature—not just for its own sake, but for the well-being of current and future generations.

As Head of the Department, I am proud to present this strategy as a reflection of our collective ambition and dedication. Together, we have the opportunity—and the obligation—to leave a legacy of protected landscapes that reflect the richness and diversity of our province's natural resources.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Relebohile Mofokane', written over a white background.

Mr Relebohile Mofokane
Head of Department: North West Department of Economic Development, Environment, Conservation and Tourism

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Protected areas are fundamental to effective biodiversity conservation and the maintenance of essential natural resources that society is reliant on for its well-being, livelihoods and survival. A system of protected areas plays an important role in ensuring landscape-level ecological integrity and resilience, which enables mitigation of and adaptation to environmental uncertainties associated with climate change and other impacts.



The North West Protected Area Expansion Strategy (NW PAES) is embedded within the national and provincial policy environment and is integrated with the National Protected Area Expansion Strategy. It has been developed concurrently with the North West Biodiversity Sector Plan and the updating of its spatial planning tools in particular its Critical Biodiversity Areas (CBAs) – key to informing spatial priorities for protected area expansion. The NW PAES is intended to be used by those involved in protected area expansion, which includes conservation agencies, conservation non-governmental organisations (NGOs), funding agencies, policymakers in relevant provincial and national departments, local government and the private sector.

PROTECTED AREA COVERAGE

Approximately 3.6% of the province falls within formally protected areas (Type 1, 2 and 5 as listed in Table 2). In comparison, South Africa's protected area network covers approximately 9.8% of the country's land surface. An additional 7.76% is designated as biosphere reserves, world heritage sites and conservancies (Table 2) bringing the total NW PAN extent to 11.42%. Most of the protected areas within the province are concentrated in the savanna biome in the northeast of the province with very little of the western portion of the province and very little of the grassland biome, in the southeast of the province, being protected. Levels of Protection for ecosystems (vegetation types) in the NW show that conservation targets for only 3 ecosystems are achieved whereas 9 ecosystems are

currently not represented in any PA. Levels of Protection is an indication of how well the NW PAN achieves the mandated conservation targets for vegetation types.

CONSERVATION AND PROTECTED AREAS IN NORTH WEST PROVINCE (PACA DATABASE)

The NW's current protected area system achieves about 18% of vegetation type conservation targets. These are national targets that have been set for each vegetation type and constitute the amount (ha) of each vegetation type that should be formally protected to represent the variety of habitats, communities and species that make up that vegetation type. It should be noted that these targets are likely to be increased in response to South Africa's obligations in terms of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, particularly Target 3, which is to ensure that by 2030, at least 30 per cent of terrestrial, inland water important for biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services are conserved and managed through systems of protected areas. The existing gaps in the protected area network and the listed threatened ecosystems provide some clear priorities for protected area expansion.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PROTECTED AREAS

Biodiversity is fundamental to human wellbeing, underpinning food production and security, medicine, energy, clean air and water, security from natural disasters and supporting many



recreational and cultural pursuits. It supports all systems of life on earth.

Protected areas are the backbone of South Africa's biodiversity economy, driving tourism, the wildlife ranching sector and other related industries. There are outstanding examples of protected areas on communal land being primary drivers of rural economic development, providing jobs and business opportunities for the community members involved. They provide the opportunity to re-frame rural economic development in South Africa, placing it on a sustainable trajectory that can lead to meaningful improvements in livelihoods and social well-being.

Protected areas provide the obvious platform when considering initiatives linked to the biodiversity economy, sustainable rangeland management and other forms of agriculture, ecological restoration linked to the provision of essential ecosystem services and new and emerging forms of innovative finance such as the provision of carbon and biodiversity credits. The legal status of protected areas provides security for these types of investments, as does the presence of a management authority, which is an established legal entity with which investors can engage and enter into partnerships. The adoption of a management plan and its implementation provides a framework for good management of such areas and embeds mechanisms that ensure oversight and accountability. Protected areas thus provide a level of security, particularly in the context of communal land, which provides an ability to leverage private sector investment and local and international grant funding.

The White Paper on Conservation and Sustainable Use of South Africa's Biodiversity and other key policy documents such as the National Biodiversity Economy Strategy are re-framing the character of biodiversity conservation and protected area expansion in South Africa. This has been acknowledged by SANParks through the recent launch of its Vision 2040, which places people at the heart of conservation. Examples of this new thinking are being seen in the development of the new types of people-centred protected areas throughout South Africa. The legal protection provided by the protected area declarations has in all of these cases provided security for the investments being made in them whether they are in the development of wildlife economy initiatives, large-scale ecological restoration initiatives, the generation of carbon credits or certified sustainable rangeland management initiatives.

The business case and value proposition for protected area expansion entails much more than the conservation of biodiversity. It provides a platform for completely re-shaping rural economic development in South Africa and North West, leading to far greater, equitable benefits for the rural poor.

STRATEGIC GOALS FOR PROTECTED AREA EXPANSION

The NW PAES vision is to:

Expand the protected area system in the NW in a strategic, targeted fashion to ensure the persistence of key biodiversity

features and ecological processes, while fostering inclusive community participation, promoting sustainable livelihoods, and enhancing environmental stewardship for the benefit of present and future generations.

This is supported by the following objectives, which are to:

- ▶ Secure priority areas of natural or near-natural habitat for representation and persistence of biodiversity.
- ▶ Enable ecological connectivity at landscape levels that facilitates the movement and dispersal of key species within the province and beyond.
- ▶ Enable the maintenance of landscape-level ecological processes and functions, essential for the provision of ecological services that support society and human well-being.
- ▶ Facilitate climate change mitigation and adaptation through the protection of ecological infrastructure that reduces the threats and impacts of extreme events associated with climate change, leading to enhanced environmental and socio-economic resilience.
- ▶ Enable and facilitate sustainable rural economic development, job creation and improved food security in support of sustainable land use and South Africa's biodiversity economy.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



SPATIAL VISION

The NW PAES spatial vision is the high-level spatial plan that informs where on-the-ground PA development take place. The PAES spatial vision is a spatial interpretation of the NW PAES Strategic Goals (see Section 6).

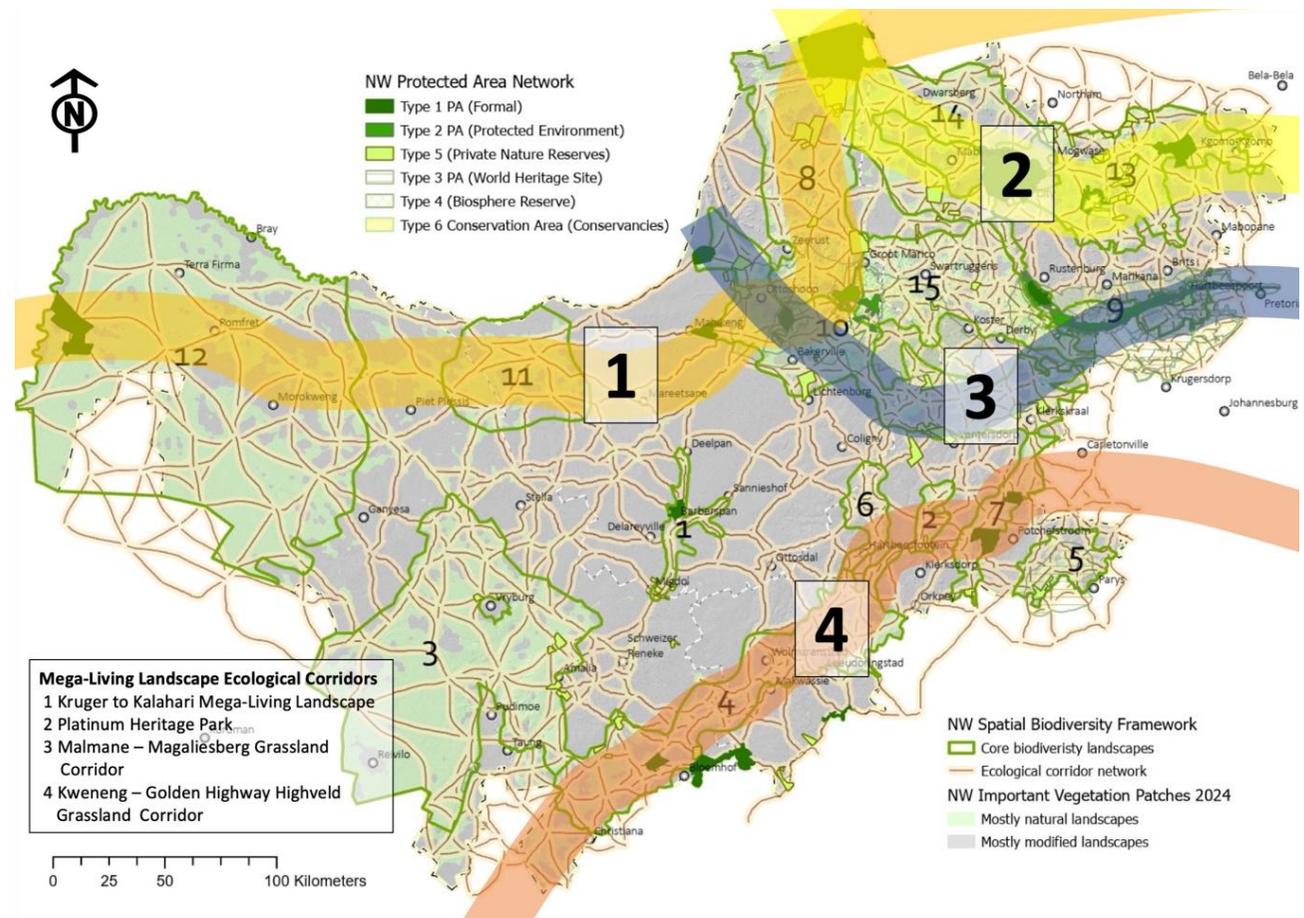
There are four spatial themes guiding the development of the NW PA spatial vision:

1. Build a representative PA network that achieves biodiversity conservation targets for all vegetations types.
2. Build at least two (2) whole ecosystem-scale PA landscapes (i.e. >500 000 ha) that can conserve evolutionary-viable populations of large herbivores (Molopo and Madikwe).
3. Build the core spatial elements of landscape scale ecological corridors and mega-living landscapes. These corridors are central to achieving a variety of landscape-scale ecological processes, primarily those related to (1) facilitating biodiversity movement and (2) maintain larger populations in response to climate change. Therefore, these corridors connect the bioregions of the province and country, and are aligned with the major climatic and environmental gradients.
4. Build PA landscapes that drive the biodiversity economy and create opportunities for rural economic development and participation.

These planning principles are used to interpret and combine the various national, provincial and local scale PA spatial vision informants.

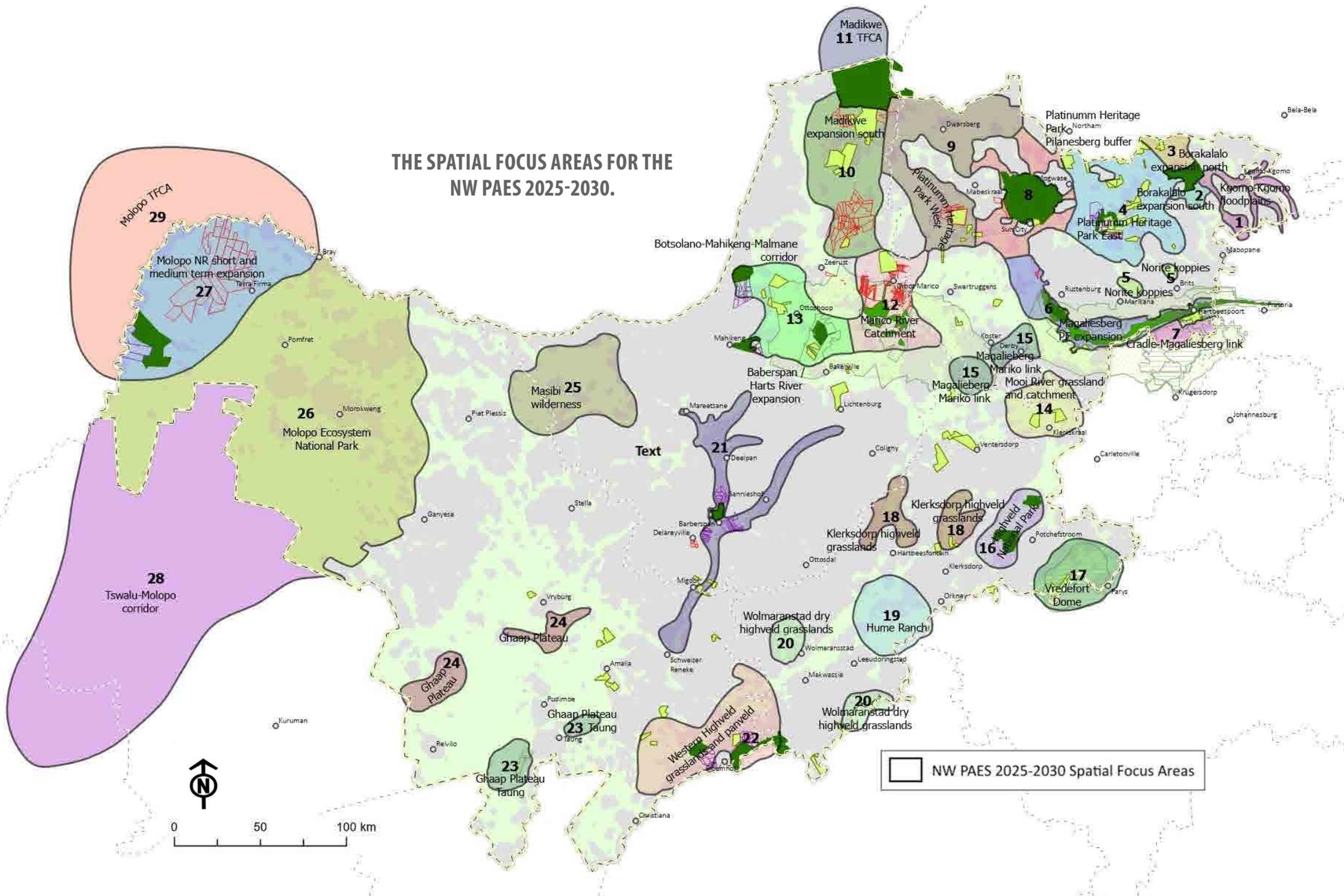
The NW PAES spatial vision can be summarised into four major corridors:

1. Kruger to Kalahari Mega-Living Landscape. This corridor connects the Kruger National Park to the Kalahari National Park *via* the Waterberg mountains. Within NW there are four key nodes in this corridor, namely, (1) Madikwe, (2) Malmame Karst Landscape (Marico to Mahikeng), (3) Mositha Natural Area west of Mahikeng, and (4) Molopo Kalahari ecosystem.
2. Platinum Heritage Park is a long standing PAES planning concept within the NW. This spatial concept has been expanded to extend eastwards *via* the Komo-Komo / Moretele River floodplains into Gauteng (Dinokeng), Mpumalanga (Ekgangala) and Limpopo (Sekhukhune).
3. Malmame – Magaliesberg Grassland Corridor. This grassland corridor connects the Mahikeng/Malmame/Botsalano PAES node to the Ekgangala grasslands in Mpumalanga *via* the Malmame karst landscape, Magaliesberg and hominid WHS (Cradle of Humankind).
4. Kweneng – Golden Highway Highveld Grassland Corridor. This corridor connects the mesic and arid grasslands of the southern Highveld. It is named after the metropolis of Kweneng, a massive pre-colonial city centred around Suikerbosrand in southern Gauteng.



The NW PAES spatial vision for the development of protected areas in the province.

THE SPATIAL FOCUS AREAS FOR THE NW PAES 2025-2030.





SPATIAL PRIORITIES FOR PAES IMPLEMENTATION

Spatial priorities for protected area expansion in North West are based on the areas necessary to achieve conservation targets for biodiversity pattern and ecological processes as identified through the systematic conservation assessment used to inform the provincial CBA map. In addition, they are informed by areas identified based on context specific opportunities or risks such as areas with low conflict with competing land uses or high landowner willingness and biodiversity risk such as areas at high risk of being lost if no conservation action is taken. Finally spatial priorities have been informed by expert inputs in which areas important for inclusion in the protected area system have been identified. Through the expert inputs, 52 areas were mapped in the figure on the previous page and further refined into 29 geographic focus areas for PAES action.

These areas are then ranked in order of priority for implementation. Spatial priorities for PAES implementation area assessed using criteria that reflect:

- ▶ Contribution to achieving conservation goals;
- ▶ Biodiversity risk or the likelihood is of an area being lost to other land uses should there be no conservation action;
- ▶ Expert opinion on priorities;
- ▶ Location of existing PA initiatives; and,
- ▶ Non-biodiversity values specifically the rural economic imperative.

MECHANISMS FOR PROTECTED AREA EXPANSION

The National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act, 2003 is an innovative legal instrument that enables the declaration of protected areas on any type of landownership. The mechanisms for protected area declaration enable a conservation authority to purchase land or to have land donated or bequeathed to it, which it can then declare as a protected area. State-owned land, administered by a government entity other than a conservation authority (e.g. Department of Public Works) can be declared with the concurrence of the Minister or MEC responsible for the administration of the land and state-owned land that is held in trust for a community (e.g. administered by a traditional authority).

Privately-owned land, which would include land owned by individuals, companies, trusts and communal property associations (CPAs) can be declared through the written consent of the landowner in the case of a protected environment or through a written agreement between the Minister, the MEC or SANParks and the landowner in the case of a national park or nature reserve. The terms of such written agreements must be recorded in a notarial deed agreement and endorsed on the title deeds of the property. The NW PAES includes a detailed description of mechanisms for protected area expansion.



Because land acquisition is generally not financially feasible, the primary means for protected area expansion is based on the biodiversity stewardship model with a focus on the declaration of state-owned communal land and private land.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BR	Biosphere Reserve
BIOFIN	Biodiversity Finance Initiative (United Nations Development Programme)
CBA	Critical Biodiversity Area
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CPA	Communal Property Association
CR or CE	Critically Endangered
DEDECT	Department of Economic Development, Environment, Conservation and Tourism (North West province)
DFFE	Department of Forestry Fisheries and the Environment
EN	Endangered
EPWP	Expanded Public Works Programme
GBF	Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework
IPILRA	Interim Protection of Informal Land Rights Act
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
LC	Least Concern
LRBSI	Land Reform and Biodiversity Stewardship Initiative
MEC	Member of the Executive Council
METT	Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool
MTDP	Medium-term Development Plan (2024-2029)
NBA	National Biodiversity Assessment
NBES	National Biodiversity Economy Strategy
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
NDP	National Development Plan
NEMA	National Environmental Management Act, 1998
NEMBA	National Environment Management: Biodiversity Act, 2004
NEMPAA	National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act, 2003

NFEPA	National Freshwater Ecosystem Priority Area
NP	National Park
NPAES	National Protected Area Expansion Strategy
NR	Nature Reserve
NWBSAP	North West Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2030
NW BETS	North West Biodiversity Economy Transformation Strategy 2016
NW PAES	North West Protected Area Expansion Strategy
NWPTB	North West Parks and Tourism Board
OECD	Other Area-based Conservation Measure
PA	Protected Area
PACA	National Protected Area and Conservation Area Database
PAN	Protected Area Network
PDI	Previously Disadvantaged Individual
SANBI	South African National Biodiversity Institute
SANParks	South African National Parks
SBF	Spatial Biodiversity Framework
SDF	Spatial Development Framework
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations
SMME	Small, medium and micro enterprise
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SWSA	Strategic Water Source Areas
TFCA	Trans-frontier Conservation Area
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VU	Vulnerable
WHS	World Heritage Site
WWF-SA	World Wide Fund for Nature South Africa

DEFINITION OF TERMS



Biodiversity	The variability among living organisms from all sources including, terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part and also includes diversity within species, between species, and of ecosystems (as per the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act, 2004 [Act No. 10 of 2004].
Biodiversity Economy	The biodiversity economy refers to the economic activities and sectors that either directly rely on biodiversity for their core business or contribute to its conservation through their activities. This includes industries like wildlife tourism, game ranching, bioprospecting, and sustainable use of wild species.
Conservation Area	An area of land or sea that is not formally protected in terms of NEMPAA, but is nevertheless managed, at least partly, for biodiversity conservation. Because there is no long-term security associated with conservation areas, they are not considered a strong form of protection. Conservation areas contribute towards the conservation estate, but not the protected area estate. Conservation areas have largely been superseded by OEEMs (see definition below).
Ecological integrity	The sum of the biological, physical and chemical components of an ecosystem and its products, functions and attributes (as per the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act, 2003 [Act No. 5 of 2003].
Ecosystem	A dynamic complex of animal, plant and micro-organism communities and their non-living environment interacting as a functional unit (as per the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act, 2003 [Act No. 5 of 2003].
Ecosystem services	As defined in Section 1 of the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act, 2003 (Act No. 57 of 2003) as “environmental goods and services” meaning: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Benefits obtained from ecosystems such as food, fuel and fibre and genetic resources.▶ Benefits from the regulation of ecosystem processes such as climate regulation, disease and flood control and detoxification.▶ Cultural non-material benefits obtained from ecosystems such as benefits of a spiritual, recreational, aesthetic, inspirational, educational, community and symbolic nature;”
Endemism	The ecological state where a species is found exclusively within a specific geographic area and nowhere else in the world.
Environmental degradation	The deterioration of the environment through depletion of resources such as air, water and soil; the destruction of ecosystems and the loss of species or undesirable reduction of species population numbers from a specific area from an environmental health perspective
Management	In relation to a protected area, includes control, protection, conservation, maintenance and rehabilitation of the protected area with due regard to the use and extraction of biological resources, community-based practices and benefit sharing activities in the area in a manner consistent with the Biodiversity Act (as per the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act, 2003 (Act No. 57 of 2003).

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Management authority	In relation to a protected area, means the organ of state or other institution or person in which the authority to manage the protected area is vested (as per the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act, 2003 [Act No. 5 of 2003]).
Mega Living Conservation Landscapes	A landscape-level initiative, comprising a mosaic of conservation and production systems and different elements including land and water, biodiversity, livelihoods and heritage, under different legal and management arrangements that is centred on the needs of people and provides a basis for sustainable rural development.
Monitoring	The collection and analysis of repeated observations or measurements to evaluate change in status, distribution or integrity in order to track the impacts of directed management implemented to achieve a stated management objective.
Other effective area-based mechanism (OECM)	Geographically defined areas outside of formally designated protected areas that are managed in a way that achieves long-term, in-situ conservation of biodiversity. They can be managed with conservation as a primary, secondary, or even an unintended outcome of other management objectives.
Protected area	Means any of the protected areas referred to in section 9 of the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act, 2003 (Act No. 57 of 2003).
World heritage site	Means a World Heritage Site as defined in the World Heritage Convention Act, No. 49 of 1999 under Chapter 1, section 1 subsection (xxiv).



1



Protected areas are fundamental to effective biodiversity conservation and the maintenance of essential natural resources that society is reliant on for its well-being, livelihoods and survival.

A system of protected areas plays an important role in ensuring landscape-level ecological integrity and resilience, which enables mitigation of and adaptation to environmental uncertainties associated with climate change and other impacts. A system of protected areas must be representative and be effectively secured and managed if biodiversity targets, determined through a systematic biodiversity planning approach, are to be met.

Protected areas are vital instruments for achieving biodiversity conservation. In South Africa, they are defined as an area of land, freshwater, or sea that are formally protected by law and managed primarily for biodiversity conservation. This definition largely excludes other critical biodiversity areas that lack

formal legal protection, which in South Africa are classified as conservation areas. Protected areas also form the cornerstone of South Africa's contribution to global biodiversity conservation efforts. The establishment and effective management of protected areas is essential, particularly as many are located in areas where people live. In such cases, they often enclose land and resources that are both critical for conservation and essential to rural livelihoods."

The most recent National Biodiversity Assessment (2018) shows that almost half of South Africa's ecosystem types are threatened with estuaries, rivers and wetlands having the highest proportion of threatened ecosystem types. Thirty-one percent of ecosystem types are not represented in the current national protected area system, with wetlands and river ecosystem types having the lowest levels of protection overall. This trend is reflected in the NW, where less than 3.5% of the land area of the province is protected. At a national level, a National Protected Area Expansion Strategy (NPAES) (Department of Environmental Affairs 2018) has been developed and provides a framework for the expansion and consolidation of the protected area system, focussing on priority areas for representation and persistence of biodiversity.

The NPAES identifies the need for the creation of finer-scale provincial protected area expansion strategies, based on regional and local conservation imperatives. Accordingly, a NW Protected Area Expansion Strategy (NW PAES) was developed in 2011. This current revision of the NW PAES has been undertaken concurrently with the development of the NW's

Biodiversity Sector Plan and the update of its spatial planning tools, in particular its Critical Biodiversity Areas (CBAs) and Ecological Support Areas (ESAs), which are key to informing spatial priorities for protected area expansion. This is a logical approach, as there are several complementary aspects to the two processes and the documents produced from them.

Expansion of the NW protected area system should take place concurrently with efforts to improve biodiversity management and effectiveness within existing and new protected areas and in support of other complementary initiatives, in particular the establishment of Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs), as defined in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). Together with protected areas, OECMs form an important component in achieving a system of representative conservation and protected areas, intended to secure South Africa's and, in this case, the NW's biodiversity and its ecological integrity and resilience.

The NW PAES is intended to be used by those involved in protected area expansion, which includes conservation agencies, environmental/conservation non-governmental organisations (NGOs), funding agencies, policymakers in relevant provincial and national departments, local government and the private sector.



**NORTH WEST
PROVINCE PAES
CONTEXT**



2.1 SOCIAL INDICATORS

Efforts to protect biodiversity and undertake protected area expansion are heavily affected by the socio-economic context of a region. Issues of poverty, service delivery and population pressures drive the loss of habitat and biodiversity and must be considered when determining approaches and strategies to protect biodiversity and establish new protected areas and expand existing ones. The following summary of social indicators is sourced from data and information provided by StatsSA.

2.1.1 Population growth

The NW has a population of approximately 4.1 million people, which represents about 7% of South Africa's total population. The primary ethnic group in the province is black African, making up approximately 90% of the population, with white (approximately 6%), coloured (approximately 2%) and Indian/Asian (less than 1%) making up the remainder. The most spoken language is Setswana (over 60%) followed by Afrikaans and English. Rates of urbanisation are moderate, with many people living in rural areas, especially in former homelands like Bophuthatswana. The province has high poverty rates, particularly in rural areas, and unemployment is above the national average, especially among youth. There is a shortage of technical and higher



education institutions, though North-West University is a key asset. Public health services face capacity and infrastructure challenges and HIV/AIDS prevalence is high, impacting productivity and healthcare demands.

2.1.2 Economic sector

Mining is the dominant sector followed by agriculture within NW's economic sectors, contributing over 30% and 3% respectively to provincial GDP. The province is rich in platinum group metals (PGMs), gold, and uranium and home to major mining towns like Rustenburg and Klerksdorp. Agriculture is a significant sector in rural areas in which sunflower, maize, and cattle production are undertaken, although the province is vulnerable to drought and climate variability. Manufacturing is limited but includes food processing and mining-related manufacturing. Tourism is focussed in centres that include Sun City, Pilanesberg Nature Reserve, and cultural heritage sites. There is potential for growth of tourism but underdeveloped infrastructure hinders expansion. Trade and services is a growing sector in urban nodes like Mahikeng (the capital) and Rustenburg.



2.1.3 Economic challenges and opportunities

The NW has an unemployment rate of 40.4%. Significantly, 58.8% of the province's youth are unemployed. Other key challenges to economic development in NW include infrastructure backlogs, service delivery issues, and poor governance in some municipalities. Others relate to environmental concerns from mining and water scarcity.

Key opportunities for economic growth relate to diversification beyond mining through agro-processing, renewable energy, and tourism. The province's strategic location near Gauteng also provides the opportunity for economic spillover and logistics development.

Protected area expansion in NW can unlock economic potential and job creation through biodiversity economy initiatives and enhance agriculture through livestock rangeland management, focusing in rural areas.

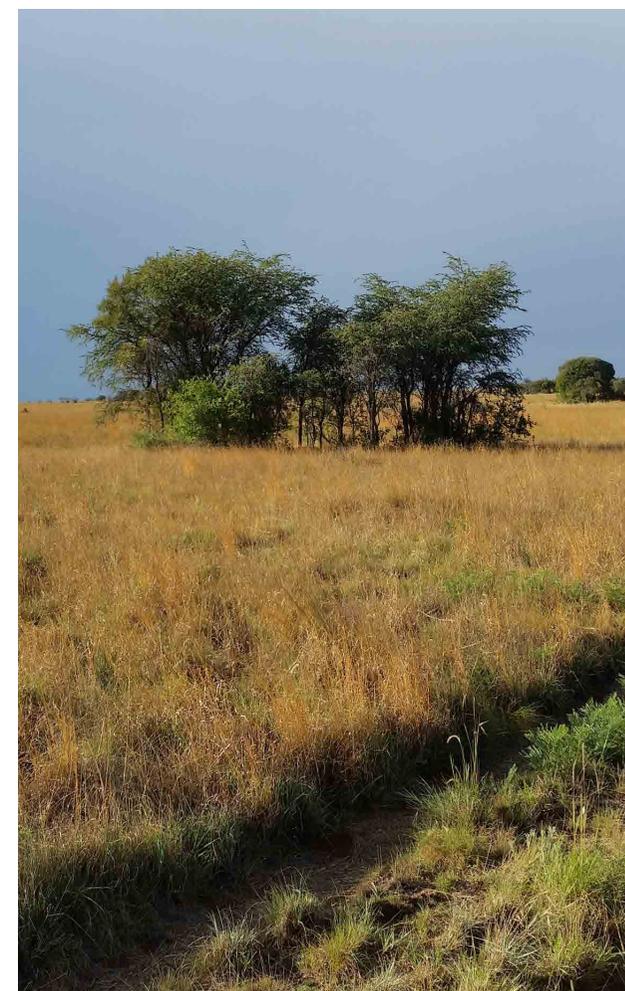
2.2 BIODIVERSITY CONTEXT

In considering the imperatives linked to protected area establishment and expansion, the intention is to conserve a representative example of all the NW's biodiversity. In this context, conceptually,

biodiversity consists of interrelated patterns and processes. Ecological patterns, like the distribution of species or vegetation types, are the result of ecological processes, such as nutrient cycling, succession, or species interactions.

2.2.1 Biomes and bioregions

There are two biomes within the province, the Grassland Biome, which is in the south-eastern portion of the province and the Savanna Biome, which is in the northern (bushveld) and western (Kalahari) parts of the province. In addition, there are areas of azonal vegetation, which consist predominantly of Highveld Alluvial Vegetation and one Freshwater Lake (Barberspan), associated with a large area of wetlands within the Grasslands Biome. Within the biomes, the Savanna Biome is divided into the Central Bushveld and Eastern Kalahari Bushveld bioregions in the east and west respectively. The Grassland Biome is divided into the Mesic Highveld Grassland and Dry Highveld Grassland Bioregions, similarly, in the east and west respectively (Mucina and Rutherford 2006). There are 39 vegetation types in the NW (Desmet et al. 2024).



2.2.2 Landcover

Approximately 63% of the NW remains in a natural condition (Figure 1). Loss of natural ecosystems is not evenly distributed across the province. The areas that have experienced the highest levels of habitat loss are within the Grassland Biome, particularly vegetation types with soils and climate suitable for dryland crop production. Approximately 33% of the province is cropland or secondary vegetation that has developed post cropping. Built-up-areas that include urban settlement, industrial and mining land uses cover 4% of the province, and are concentrated in the northeast of the province associated with the greater-Gauteng metropolitan region and the gold and platinum mining belts.

Land cover patterns have a significant impact on the protected area strategy. Landscapes and ecosystems that are mostly in a natural condition are conducive to the development of traditional protected areas, where large contiguous areas can be bought/contracted and managed as a single ecological unit. Here, maintaining viable populations of large mammals is possible and these landscapes are ideal for biodiversity economy development.

Conversely, in highly modified landscapes, conservation targets can generally only be achieved through a collection of scattered remnants of

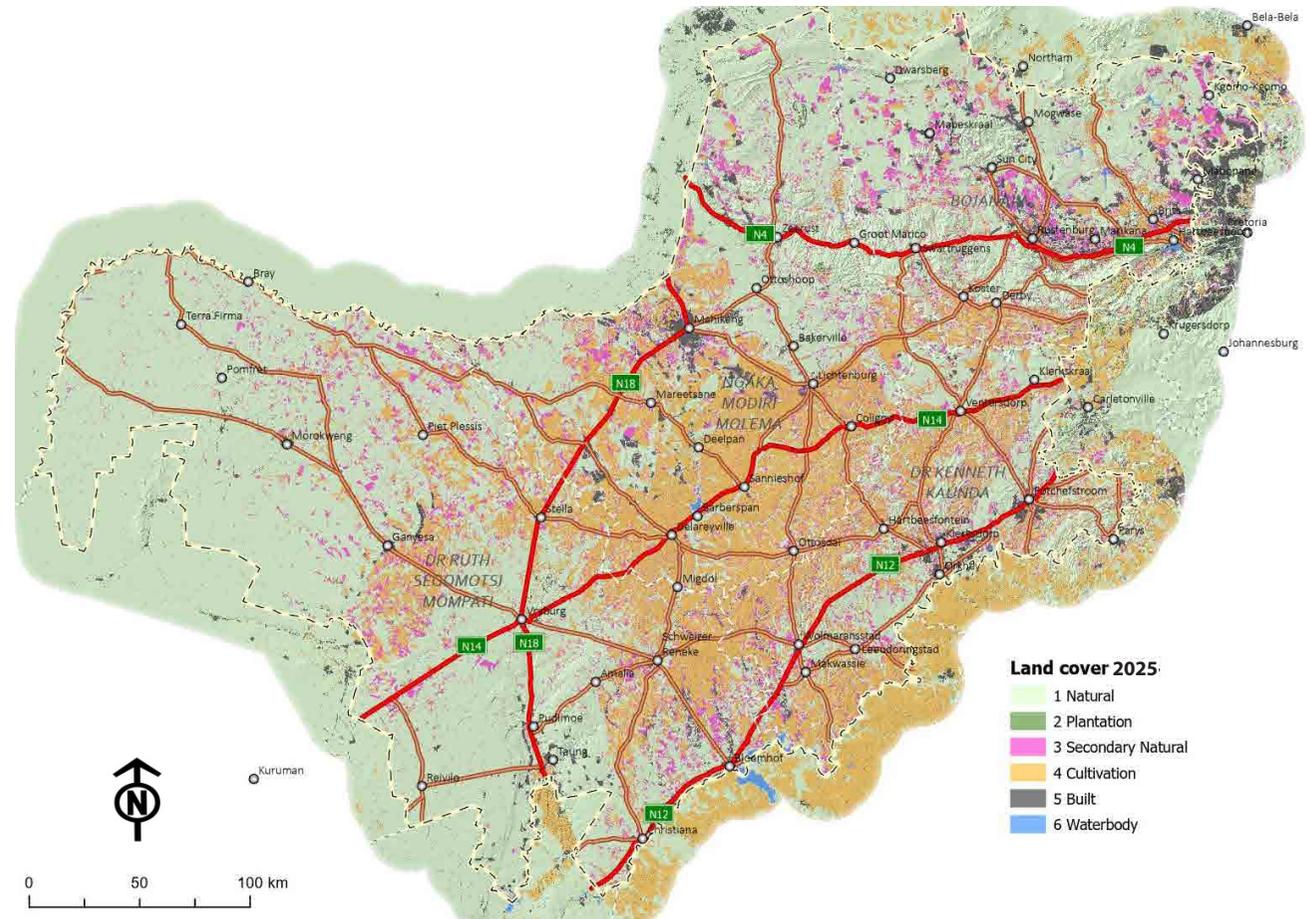


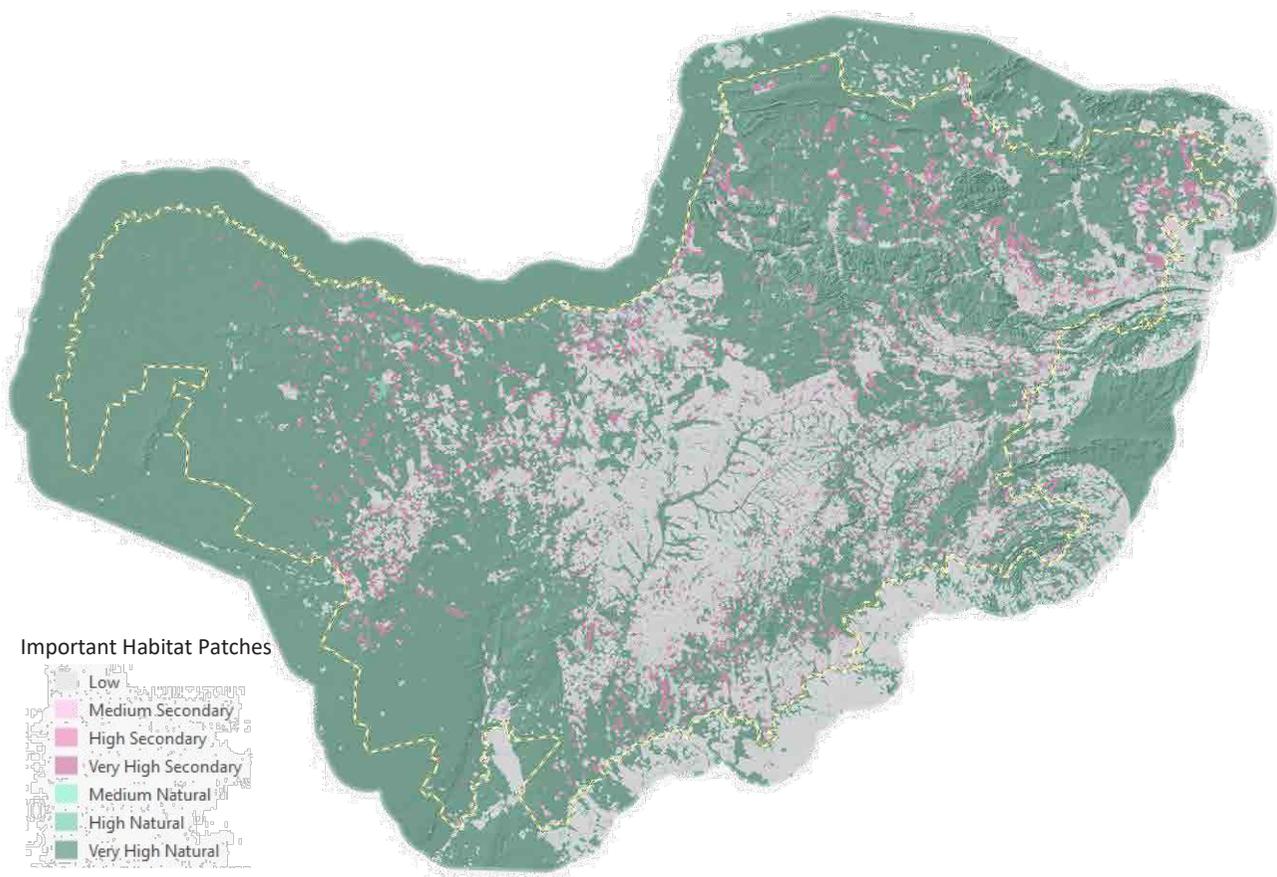
Figure 1. The 2024 landcover of the North West Province.

Table 1. Summary of the threatened ecosystems in the NW Province.

Ecosystem Name	Original Extent (ha)	Remaining Extent (ha)	% Remaining	Conservation Target (ha)	% Conservation Target	Threat Status 2025
Springbokvlakte Thornveld	22,491	4,566	20.3	867	19	CE
Vaal-Vet Sandy Grassland	1,033,728	173,666	16.8	41,680	24	CE
Marikana Thornveld	127,055	32,780	25.8	6,228	19	VU
Rand Highveld Grassland	265,022	81,892	30.9	19,654	24	VU
Vredefort Dome Granite Grassland	4,450	1,615	36.3	388	24	VU
Western Highveld Sandy Grassland	734,949	217,545	29.6	52,211	24	VU
Klerksdorp Thornveld	343,903	174,359	50.7	41,846	24	EN
Moot Plains Bushveld	139,695	56,716	40.5	10,776	19	EN
Schweizer-Reneke Bushveld	133,543	51,281	38.4	8,205	16	EN
Vaal Reefs Dolomite Sinkhole Woodland	26,543	15,952	60.1	3,829	24	EN
Vryburg Thornveld	646,260	292,756	45.3	46,841	16	EN

Any new development in threatened ecosystems will trigger the requirement for a biodiversity offset in terms of the national policy. Biodiversity offsets are recognised and practical mechanisms for PA establishment. From the PAES perspective, threatened ecosystems are strategic informants for prioritising areas for PA establishment. These represent areas where biodiversity is threatened with habitat loss and where the ability to achieve targets is constrained.

Threatened ecosystems are retreating due to ongoing loss of habitat. Therefore, PAES focus areas containing threatened ecosystems are immediate or short/medium term priorities for PA development as options for achieving conservation targets.



2.2.4 Ecological processes: Landscape connectivity and ecological corridors

Ecological connectivity refers to the degree to which a landscape facilitates or impedes the movement and interaction of species between different habitat patches. Ecological connectivity is crucial for maintaining biodiversity, ensuring the proper functioning of ecosystems, and adapting to climate change. Essentially, it's about ensuring that species can move freely and that ecological processes can continue unimpeded, even in the face of habitat fragmentation.

In the context of NW, ecological connectivity is determined by the aspects of ecological pattern. These include the topography, geology and hydrology of the province as well as the different biomes and vegetation types, the remaining natural habitat within these biomes and vegetation types and the degree of fragmentation associated with the loss of natural habitat within them. These factors all influence the threat status of the vegetation types, as described above. The levels of landscape connectivity within the province enable ecological corridors to be modelled, focussing on important habitat patches that are largely intact and pristine through a range of other habitat patches that may not be as intact or may be degraded or partially modified (Figure 3). Recognising and maintaining the remaining landscape ecological connectivity is a central informant of both the Biodiversity Sector Plan CBA Map and the design of the protected area system in the NW PAES (see Section 7.3).

Figure 3. Important natural and secondary natural habitat patches in the NW province. Important patches uses land cover and patch size/proximity metrics to calculate the remaining connected natural habitat in the province.

3



**LEGISLATIVE, REGULATORY &
POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR
PA EXPANSION**

LEGISLATIVE, REGULATORY AND POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR PA EXPANSION



3.1 THE LEGAL MANDATE FOR PROTECTED AREA EXPANSION

In terms of schedule 4 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, the environment is a concurrent national and provincial mandate. This is reflected in key legislation, such as the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act, 2003 (Act No. 57 of 2003) (NEMPAA), which empowers both the national minister and provincial members of the executive council (MECs) to undertake the process of declaring protected areas.

The MEC of the North West Department of Economic Development, Environment, Conservation and Tourism (DEDECT) is responsible for the environmental mandate within the province, including the conservation of biodiversity. The North West Parks and Tourism Board (NWPTB), which was established through the North West Parks and Tourism Board Act, 2002 (Act No. 2 of 2002), is delegated with the responsibility of biodiversity conservation, including the management of state-owned provincial protected areas and in assisting and advising the MEC in undertaking protected area expansion initiatives.

3.2 THE PROTECTED AREAS ACT AND BIODIVERSITY STEWARDSHIP

The primary legislation guiding protected area expansion is provided through NEMPAA. Section 9 of NEMPAA defines the kinds of protected areas which make up South Africa's system of protected areas:

- ▶ Special nature reserves, national parks, nature reserves (including wilderness areas) and protected environments;
- ▶ World heritage sites;
- ▶ Marine protected areas;
- ▶ Special protected forest areas, forest nature reserves and forest wilderness areas declared in terms of the National Forests Act, 1998 (Act No. 84 of 1998); and,
- ▶ Mountain catchment areas declared in terms of the Mountain Catchment Areas Act, 1970 (Act No. 63 of 1970).

Most protected area expansion that has taken place since the promulgation of NEMPAA has been in the form of national parks, nature reserves and protected environments and to a lesser extent, through the declaration of world heritage sites. There is a strong enabling environment within South Africa for protected area expansion, as NEMPAA provides national and provincial biodiversity conservation authorities with several mechanisms to expand the system of protected areas. These include declaration of land that is purchased by or

donated to a conservation authority, or other types of land owned by the state, land held in trust by the state on behalf of communities, and privately owned land. In addition to this, a suite of tools has been developed, under the auspices of national and provincial Biodiversity Stewardship Programmes, to formally recognise conservation efforts that supplement the system of protected areas (Figure 4). In some instances, these areas are recognised as Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs) as described in Target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Environmental Framework (GBF).

A primary means of protected area expansion is through the declaration of private land and state-owned communal land as protected areas. This includes the declaration of new protected areas or additions to existing ones as contemplated in sections 20, 23 and 28 of NEMPAA. The NPAES acknowledges that, because the cost to purchase the land required to meet the country's protected area expansion targets would be unrealistically prohibitive, expansion through contractual arrangements with landowners and land rights holders provides the primary option for effective protected area expansion. In South Africa, biodiversity stewardship is the approach that is used to secure land in biodiversity priority areas through entering into voluntary agreements with private landowners, Community Trusts and Communal Property Associations (CPAs), sometimes linked to traditional authorities administering state-owned communal land (SANBI 2018).

LEGISLATIVE, REGULATORY AND POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR PA EXPANSION



Figure 4. Categories applied in South Africa’s Biodiversity Stewardship Programme.

The Business Case for Biodiversity Stewardship (SANBI 2015) demonstrated that the costs to establish a protected area through contractual arrangements with landowners was between 70 and 400 times less costly to the state than land acquisition. Furthermore, the cost to the state to support ongoing management of a contract protected area was found to be between four and 17 times less than the cost to manage a state-owned protected area (SANBI 2015). This is thus an effective means of leveraging private sector investment into biodiversity conservation, through the establishment and maintenance of formal contractual partnerships in the landscape. Protected area expansion progress between 2008 and 2016 shows that biodiversity stewardship (including purchase or donation of

land by NGO partners, in particular WWF-SA and the National Parks Trust) constituted 81% of protected area expansion whilst 19% of protected area expansion was undertaken through the declaration of state land. Biodiversity stewardship, which is seen as the primary means of contract protected area expansion, accounted for the creation of 564,000 hectares of new protected areas in that period, and if one includes strategic purchase or donation through mechanisms such as the National Parks Trust, this figure is considerably higher.

This is further elucidated upon by the work done by the Biodiversity Finance Initiative (BIOFIN) undertaken for the DFFE on supporting and expanding the role of biodiversity stewardship. It estimates, that between 2004 when NEMPAA was promulgated and 2022/23, 1.8 million hectares of land were declared as protected areas in South Africa through various provincial and national biodiversity stewardship programmes, which accounts for almost all protected area expansion in South Africa during that period.

The NW has contributed 27, 206 hectares through Biodiversity Stewardship into its protected area system.



3.3 INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS

As a member of the international community, South Africa has committed to the achievement of various international obligations and targets, set through various multi-later agreements and conventions.

3.3.1 The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations (UN) members in 2015, created 17 world Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The aim of these global goals is to achieve global peace and prosperity while tackling climate change and working to preserve natural habitats. The SDGs highlight the connections between the environmental, social and economic aspects of sustainable development.

Most of the 17 SDGs are relevant in the context of protected area expansion in the NW but the following are considered particularly important:

- ▶ GOAL 3: Good health and well-being.
- ▶ GOAL 6: Clean water and sanitation.
- ▶ GOAL 8: Decent work and economic growth.
- ▶ GOAL 10: Reduce inequalities.
- ▶ GOAL 12: Responsible consumption and production.
- ▶ GOAL 13: Climate action.
- ▶ GOAL 15: Life on land.

Goal 15 is closely aligned with efforts to undertake protected area expansion. The goal is to “protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and biodiversity loss.” Each of the sustainable development goals has targets attached to them. The targets set out under goal 15 that are the most relevant in the context of protected area expansion in the NW include:

- ▶ 15.1: Conserve and restore terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems – ensure the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services, in line with obligations under international agreements.
- ▶ 15.3: End desertification and restore degraded land – combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil and strive to achieve a land-degradation neutral world.
- ▶ 15.5: Protect biodiversity and natural habitats – take urgent and significant action to reduce the degradation of natural habitats, halt the loss of biodiversity and protect and prevent the extinction of threatened species.
- ▶ 15.9: Integrate ecosystem and biodiversity in government planning – integrated ecosystem and biodiversity values into national and local planning, development processes, poverty reduction strategies and accounts.

- ▶ 15.A: Increase financial resources to conserve and sustainably use ecosystems and biodiversity – mobilise and significantly increase financial resources from all sources to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity and ecosystems.

3.3.2 The Convention on Biological Diversity and the Kunming-Montreal Biodiversity Framework

As a signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) South Africa is a party to it and has been a member since 1995. The CBD is a global, legally binding treaty that addresses all aspects of biological diversity. Its main goals are to conserve biodiversity, sustainably use its components, and ensure fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of genetic resources. Key aspects of the CBD include the conservation of biodiversity, aimed at protecting the variety of life on earth, including ecosystems, species and genetic resources, and the sustainable use of biodiversity, which is promoted in ways that do not endanger the resources that support it. The governing body of the CBD is the Conference of the Parties (COP), which meets every two years to review progress, set priorities and commit to work plans.

The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) was adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the CBD in December 2022. It was

LEGISLATIVE, REGULATORY AND POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR PA EXPANSION



adopted in response to threats to biodiversity that have seen its deterioration worldwide at rates that are unprecedented in human history. This is of particular concern as biodiversity is fundamental to human wellbeing, underpinning food production, medicine, energy, clean air and water, security from natural disasters and supporting many recreational and cultural pursuits. It supports all systems of life on earth.

The framework acknowledges the important roles and contributions of indigenous peoples and local communities as custodians of biodiversity and partners in its conservation, restoration and sustainable use. It emphasises that its implementation must ensure the rights and knowledge of indigenous peoples and local communities to be respected through their full and effective participation in decision-making related to biodiversity and its protection.

In considering the relationship of the framework and its contribution towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it places biodiversity, its conservation and sustainable use, at the heart of the sustainable development agenda. The vision of the framework is “By 2050, biodiversity is valued, conserved and restored and wisely used, maintaining ecosystem services, sustaining a healthy planet and delivering benefits for all people.”

The framework includes a number of targets that are relevant to protected area expansion in the NW and South Africa more broadly:

- ▶ Target 1: integrated biodiversity spatial planning, to bring the loss of areas of high biodiversity importance, including ecosystems of high ecological integrity, close to zero by 2030, while respecting the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities.
- ▶ Target 3: by 2030 at least 30 percent of terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, are effectively conserved and managed through ecologically representative, well-connected and equitably governed systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures.
- ▶ Target 9: ensure that the management and use of wild species are sustainable, thereby providing social, economic and environmental benefits for people, especially those in vulnerable situations and those most dependent on biodiversity.
- ▶ Target 10: ensure that areas under agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries and forestry are managed sustainably, in particular through the sustainable use of biodiversity.
- ▶ Target 14: ensure the full integration of



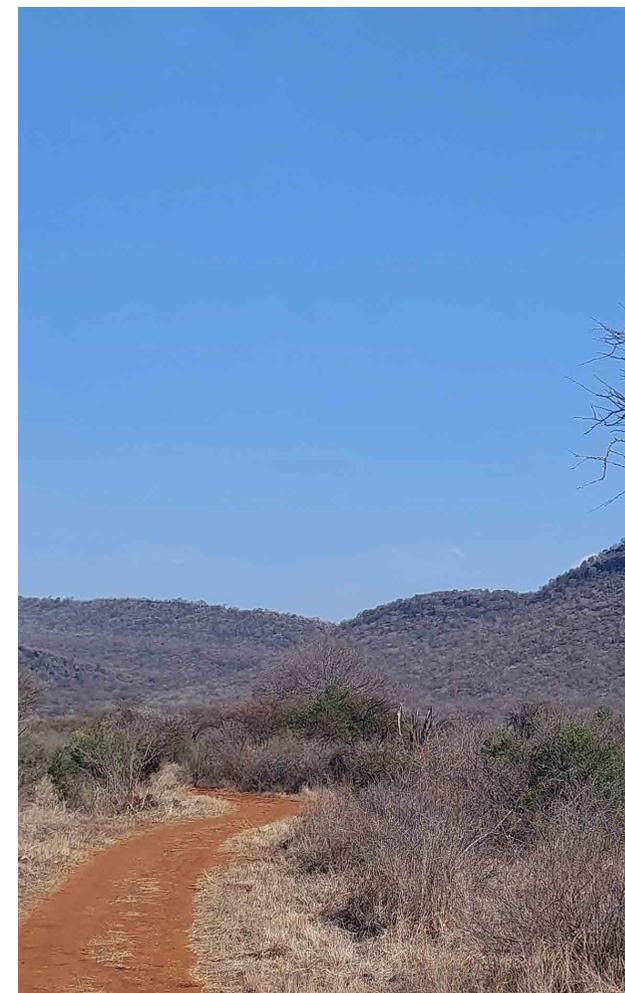
biodiversity and its multiple values into policies, regulations, planning and development processes, poverty eradication strategies, strategic environmental assessments, environmental impact assessments and, as appropriate, national accounting, within and across all levels of government and across all sectors.

- ▶ Target 22: ensure the full, equitable, inclusive, effective and gender-responsive representation and participation in decision-making, and access to justice and information related to biodiversity by indigenous peoples and local communities, respecting their cultures and their rights over land.

The framework creates strong imperatives for South Africa to address environmental and ecological degradation, the loss of natural habitat and the extinction of species. It requires a massive acceleration in protected area expansion and ecological restoration efforts. It creates a new agenda for rural economic development in South Africa, focussed on sustainable land use opportunities that empower local communities and enable their meaningful participation in biodiversity conservation efforts and the benefits that flow from them.

3.3.3 The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is the UN process for negotiating an agreement to limit dangerous climate change. It is an international treaty among countries to combat “dangerous human interference with the climate system”. The primary focus of this is on reducing and limiting emissions of greenhouse gases but it also plays a crucial role in climate change adaptation. It does this by providing a framework for international cooperation, establishing funds for adaptation projects and facilitating the development of national adaptation plans, which are strategic documents outlining how a country will adapt to the impacts of climate change. It is within the context of climate change adaptation that protected area expansion is considered most relevant. The establishment of large ecologically connected protected areas enables the movement of species and adaptation to changing environmental conditions associated with climate change. A secondary aspect of this is that well managed protected areas, including those in which ecological restoration has been undertaken, may act as carbon sinks, sequestering soil carbon and other forms of inert carbon.



LEGISLATIVE, REGULATORY AND POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR PA EXPANSION

3.

3.4 NATIONAL POLICY

3.4.1 The National Development Plan

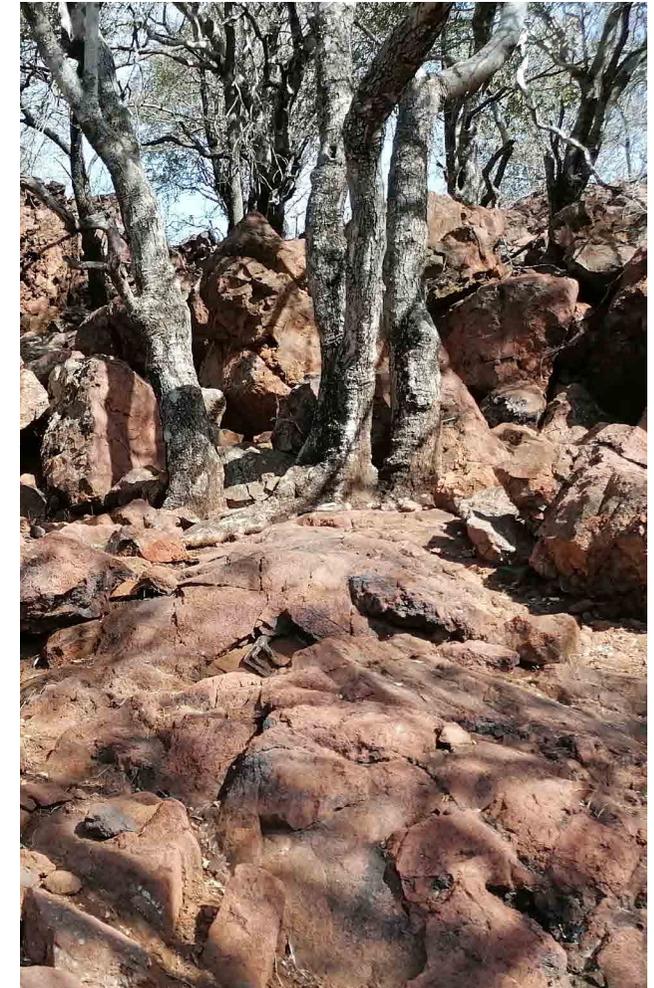
South Africa's National Development Plan (NDP) is a plan for the country to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030. It aims to grow an inclusive economy, build capabilities, enhance the capacity of the state, and promote leadership and partnerships throughout society. It acknowledges the importance of environmental sustainability and seeks to integrate it into the country's broader development trajectory. In addressing the environment, the NDP acknowledges that the country needs to:

- ▶ Protect the natural environment in all respects, leaving subsequent generations with at least an endowment of at least equal value.
- ▶ Enhance the resilience of people and the economy to climate change.
- ▶ Extract mineral wealth to generate the resources to raise living standards, skills and infrastructure in a sustainable manner.
- ▶ Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve energy efficiency.

The NDP proposes to protect the country's natural resources through the implementation of three measures:

- ▶ An environmental management framework. Developments that have serious environmental or social effects need to be offset by support for improvements in related areas.
- ▶ A target for land and oceans under protection (at the time of publication about 7.9 million hectares of land was protected).
- ▶ A set of indicators for natural resources, accompanied by publication of annual reports on the health of identified resources to inform policy.

Chapter 5 of the NDP addresses environmental sustainability and resilience and includes a series of actions, the most relevant of which is to put in place a regulatory framework for land use, to ensure the conservation and restoration of protected areas. The NDP thus provides a broad mandate for protected area expansion and the conservation of natural resources in South Africa. It encourages the setting of targets to support protected area expansion and identifies the need for enabling factors to support protected area expansion and biodiversity conservation.





3.4.2 The Medium-Term Development Plan (2024-2029)

South Africa's Medium-Term Development Plan (MTDP) 2024-2029 is a five-year strategic framework guiding the country's development priorities. It integrates the Government of National Unity's Statement of Intent with the NDP, aiming for inclusive growth, improved service delivery, and better living conditions. Much of the environmental focus of the MTDP is on climate change mitigation and adaptation and issues such as waste management. Nevertheless, the MTDP does address environmental concerns by integrating them into broader development strategies, aiming for a low-carbon, climate-resilient future, and promoting sustainable practices across various sectors. In terms of climate change, this includes enhancing adaptive capacity to manage the inevitable impacts of climate change. Amongst the sectors it focusses on, it identifies the need for sustainable agriculture and it emphasises a whole of government approach ensuring that national, provincial, and local government structures are aligned in their environmental priorities and policies. In support of this it includes provisions for monitoring, reporting, and verification systems to track progress on the achievement of environmental targets.

3.4.3 The National Biodiversity Assessment and the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan

South Africa's National Biodiversity Strategy 2015 and Action Plan (NBSAP) and National Biodiversity Assessment 2018 (NBA) are closely related, with the NBA providing the scientific basis for the NBSAP. The NBSAP is a long-term strategy for ensuring the sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity, while the NBA provides a scientific assessment of the status of South Africa's ecosystems and biodiversity. Essentially, the NBA informs the NBSAP by providing data and analysis that helps guide the development and implementation of biodiversity conservation efforts. The NBA forms the basis for the listing of threatened species and ecosystems in terms of the National Biodiversity Act, 2004 (Act No. 10 of 2004), and an important process is to see what threatened biodiversity the PAN holds.

Parties to the CBD are required to prepare their own versions of a NBSAP to guide countries in achieving the objectives of the CBD. Both the NBA and NBSAP are required to be reviewed and updated periodically to reflect changes in national conditions and international commitments. In the case of the NBSAP, there is a requirement to prepare an updated NBSAP to align with the commitments and targets set in the GBF. Accordingly, both the NBA and NBSAP are in the process of being updated, in accordance

with CBD obligations. Preliminary findings of the NBA indicate that there have been significant increases in threats to South Africa's species and ecosystems with a likely significant increase in the number of listed threatened species and higher levels of threat amongst many more species. The NBSAP will consider the findings of the NBA and will align with the targets of the GBF, which include the targets linked to protected area expansion, ecological restoration and sustainable use and will thus form the primary basis for protected area expansion and biodiversity conservation in South Africa.

3.4.4 The National Protected Area Expansion Strategy

The National Protected Areas Expansion Strategy (NPAES) was first published in 2008 and was fully reviewed in 2018. The NPAES is intended to enable cost effective protected area expansion for improved ecosystem representation, ecological sustainability and resilience to climate change. It sets protected area targets, maps priority areas for protected area expansion, and makes recommendations on mechanisms to achieve them. The common set of targets and spatial priorities provided by the NPAES enable co-ordination between the role players involved in protected area expansion and forms the basis for the development of provincial protected area expansion strategies and accompanying targets.

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The protected area expansion targets set in the NPAES are the established biodiversity targets for each ecosystem set in the current NBA. The intention of this is to ensure that targets are scientifically robust and have an ecological basis, such that no further ecosystems become Critically Endangered and that targets and assessment results for the NBA and the NPAES align. The targets set by the NBA, which are set for individual ecosystem types, were determined by proportionally allocating the total area committed to under the CBD Aichi biodiversity targets to the individual ecosystems based on their long-term targets. As the Aichi targets have been replaced by the targets set in the GBF, particularly Target 3 (the 30x30 target), the NBA will be amended accordingly and the NPAES will have to be amended too. It is envisaged that a process to review and update the NPAES, which include incorporating the commitments of the GBF will be initiated in 2025.

3.4.5 The White Paper on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity

The White Paper on Conservation and Sustainable Use of South Africa's Biodiversity, 2022, was published by the Minister and Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) in accordance with section 24 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, which includes the "right to have the environment protected for



the benefit of present and future generations through reasonable legislative and other measures that, inter alia, promote conservation and secure ecologically sustainable development and the use of natural resources while promoting justifiable economic and social development.” It represents a paradigm shift for conservation and the sustainable use of biodiversity and emphasises a uniquely South African approach to conservation, founded on the principles of Ubuntu. It forms the foundation for biodiversity conservation, including protected area expansion in South Africa.

In examining the benefits derived from biodiversity, the White Paper noted at the time of its publication that biodiversity-related jobs numbered approximately 418,000 and the biodiversity-based tourism industry was worth over R30 billion per year. It also notes that intact ecosystems and high species diversity are essential for agricultural production and highlights that healthy rangelands support livestock and wildlife (the latter being worth R14 billion per year, at the time of publication).

It states that South Africa’s biodiversity provides substantial employment that is comparable to the mining sector and that there are at least five other jobs that depend indirectly on biodiversity use, for every job dedicated to conserving biodiversity. It concludes that biodiversity contributes to the goals

of the National Development Plan (2030) by reducing poverty and inequality, through stimulating and building an inclusive rural economy. The White Paper includes several guiding principles that are relevant to biodiversity conservation and protected area expansion:

- ▶ People first: biodiversity must be protected in a way that people can benefit from its presence and use.
- ▶ Intergenerational equity: linking nature with children and future generations, which must be included in the conceptualisation of sustainability.
- ▶ Ubuntu: promotes harmonious relations, based on respect for nature for nature’s sake, economic and ecological justice for all.
- ▶ Transformation: a collective responsibility to ensure the inclusive participation and beneficiation of all people, particularly those that were previously disadvantaged, in the sector and its growth.
- ▶ Rights of local and indigenous communities: the right to self-determination and full participation in the biodiversity sector.
- ▶ Public trust: the beneficial use of biological resources must serve, or not be detrimental to, the public interest and the environment must be protected as the people’s common heritage.

- ▶ Rights and responsibilities: rights have associated responsibilities, accordingly, ownership and its associated use of biodiversity and its components is not free from responsibility, regulation, governance and, in some instances, restrictions or limitations.
- ▶ Living with biodiversity: in recognising and acknowledging their sacrifices, people living with biodiversity, for the public good, should be prioritised in terms of access and flow of benefits from biodiversity and mitigation of negative impacts incurred.

The policy objectives and expected outcomes in the White Paper include a set of goals, many of which are relevant to biodiversity conservation and protected area expansion. These include:

- ▶ Biodiversity conservation and sustainable use is transformative. This builds on concepts of environmental rights and ubuntu and is intended to advance the meaningful participation and active involvement of Previously Disadvantaged Individuals (PDIs) through the value chain of the biodiversity sector. The intention of the goal is to capitalise on the mega-diverse nature of biodiversity, and biophysical attributes, and wild landscapes, to drive rural socio-economic development.

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- ▶ Integrated, mainstreamed and effective biodiversity conservation and sustainable use. This considers integration across all spheres of government and society to ensure biodiversity contributes more meaningfully to justifiable sustainable development, but that development does not compromise conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity for present and future generations.
- ▶ Equitable access and benefits sharing. The intention of this goal is to ensure that benefits derived and shared from the use and development of South Africa's genetic and biological resources serve national interests.
- ▶ Biodiversity economy transformed. This seeks to promote and develop economic opportunities that are compatible with and complement the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and create and enable incentives that support the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

A range of policy objectives have been identified related to the goals set out in the White Paper. Amongst these is a policy objective to create large, contiguous terrestrial conservation landscapes that enhance naturalness and wildness. The outputs of this policy objective envisage landscape-level, well-functioning conservation and protected areas that

include communal and private lands, established through protected area expansion efforts that create large contiguous areas. One of the outcomes identified for this policy objective is South Africa becoming a destination of choice for international tourists to drive the development of the biodiversity economy. A further policy objective is to ensure that protected areas are effective drivers of inclusive socio-economic development. This requires changes in institutional arrangements for state protected areas, partnerships with privately owned land, co-management arrangements with communities and arrangements for incorporation of community owned land. The expected outcomes of this policy objective include:

- ▶ Expanded areas under protection and conservation.
- ▶ Improved governance and management of protected areas.
- ▶ A step-change in the biodiversity economy driven by state protected areas.
- ▶ Meaningful community participation, influence and benefit from protected areas.
- ▶ Protected areas provide localised community-based wildlife economic value chains.

Other policy objectives that are particularly relevant to biodiversity conservation and protected area expansion include enhanced cooperative



governance across spheres of government. This requires the development of tools for different sectors to easily incorporate biodiversity conservation and sustainable use. Such tools should inculcate biodiversity conservation and sustainable use into national, provincial and municipal socio-economic development plans and district development models. The intention of this is to provide an integrated conservation planning framework across spheres of government to create common purpose, priorities, tools and indicators for effective and efficient resource use. These concepts of cooperation are further built upon under the policy objective for conservation and protected areas to be better integrated into broader ecological and social landscapes, which envisages partnerships and co-management arrangements between conservation agencies, community organisations, NGOs and private entrepreneurs, which optimise biodiversity use within and outside of conservation and protected areas.

3.4.6 Biodiversity Economy

The revised draft National Biodiversity Economy Strategy 2024 (NBES) builds upon the White Paper on Conservation and Sustainable Use of South Africa's Biodiversity 2023 (the White Paper) and the Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework 2022 (GBF). It is framed to provide strategic direction for the

development of the biodiversity economy over a 10-year period.

The NBES is explicitly about sustainable use, but also emphasises the linkage to ecosystem restoration, as well as the importance of ecological infrastructure. The NBES includes enablers that are aligned with the White Paper and the implementation of the GBF, including explicitly considering financing, capacity development, and the need for cooperation and partnership. **It is underpinned by two cross-cutting imperatives:**

- ▶ Cross-cutting imperative 1: Leverage the Biodiversity Economy to promote conservation and species and ecosystem management, thereby ensuring a positive feedback loop.
- ▶ Cross-cutting imperative 2: Promote growth and transformation of the Biodiversity Economy.

The NBES sets out to achieve four strategic goals:

- ▶ **Goal 1:** Leveraging biodiversity-based features to scale inclusive ecotourism industry growth in seascapes and in sustainable conservation land-use.
 - Impact Statement: This will grow sustainable and inclusive eco-tourism-based businesses by 10% per annum through marine-based ecotourism

activities and expansion of the conservation estate from 20 million ha to 34 million ha by 2040 (4,2 million ha from declared protected areas and 10 million ha from Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures-OECMs).

- ▶ **Goal 2:** Consumptive use of Game from extensive wildlife systems at scale that drive transformation and expanded sustainable conservation compatible land-use.
 - Impact Statement: This will increase the GDP contribution for consumptive use of game from extensive wildlife systems from R4.6 billion (2020) to R27.6 billion by 2036.
- ▶ **Goal 3:** Consumptive use of wild and produced marine and freshwater resources that drives inclusive coastal socio-economic development.
 - Impact Statement: Grow sustainable consumptive use of marine, coastal, estuarine and freshwater resources, including through aquaculture, by 10% per annum by 2036. Though, freshwater systems will only be of relevance in the province.
- ▶ **Goal 4:** Well structured, inclusive, integrated and formalised Bioprospecting, Bio trade, and Biodiversity-based Harvesting and Production Sector that beneficiates communities.

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- Impact Statement: This will increase the GDP contribution of the bioprospecting/ bio trade from R1,85 billion (2020) to R11,6 billion by 2036 through local beneficiation (finished pharmaceutical, cosmetics and food supplements products), and the development of SMME based production systems for restoration and sequestration.

To achieve these goals, the NBES requires implementation of four key enablers:

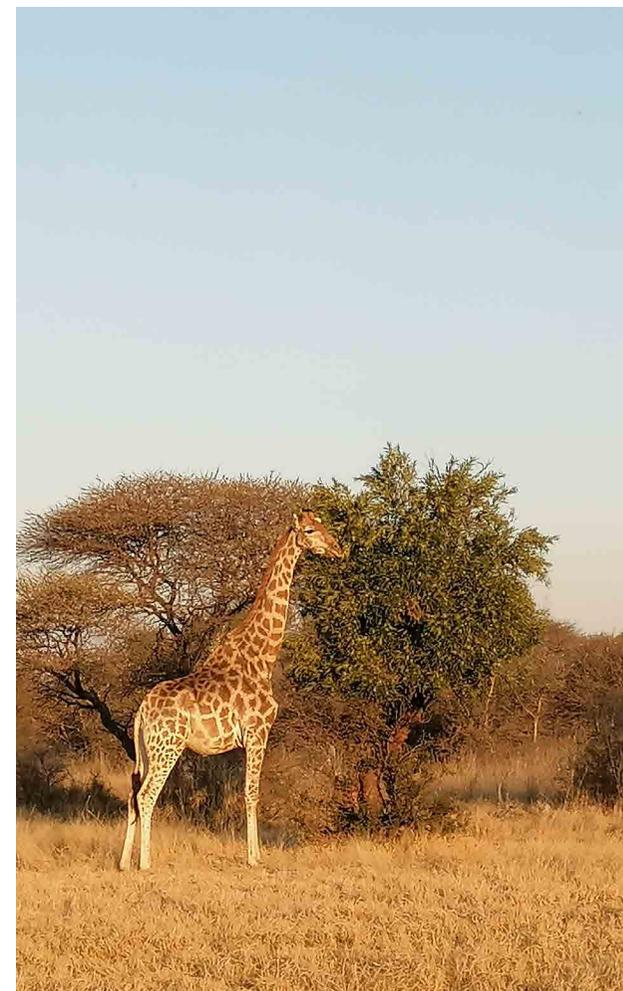
- ▶ Enabler 1: Effective and Efficient regulation and policy implementation.
- ▶ Enabler 2: Increased capacity, innovation and technological support.
- ▶ Enabler 3: Financial support sustains conservation and grows the Biodiversity Economy.
- ▶ Enabler 4: Market access for communities and Previously Disadvantaged Individuals.

These enablers are key components for successful protected area expansion and related opportunities in the biodiversity economy. The NBES emphasises the need to grow and sustain conservation landscapes while promoting and facilitating inclusive biodiversity-based businesses that drive transformation of the biodiversity sector. The NBES provides increased opportunity to contribute

to achieving more elements of the National Development Plan and the Sustainable Development Goals, as it emphasises the importance of sustainable use of biodiversity as key to inclusive socio-economic development, especially when effectively mainstreamed into cross sectoral planning.

Unlike previous versions of the National Biodiversity Economy Strategy, the revised NBES does not refer to biodiversity economy nodes but uses the term “mega living conservation landscapes”. One of its key actions is the establishment of five mega living conservation landscapes through voluntary involvement of suitable state, private and community areas. Mega living conservation landscapes envisage a mosaic of conservation and production systems under different legal and management arrangements. The mega living conservation landscapes build upon the Biodiversity Economy Nodes identified in the previous Biodiversity Economy Strategy and the NBES identifies that there are a number of these that are being established. This also aligns with SANParks Vision 2040, which is focussed on the establishment of Mega Living Landscapes.

The NBES includes actions that focus on the development of infrastructure, an increase in the number of animals available for commercial and recreational hunting and the growth of the game meat industry from extensive wildlife systems. The





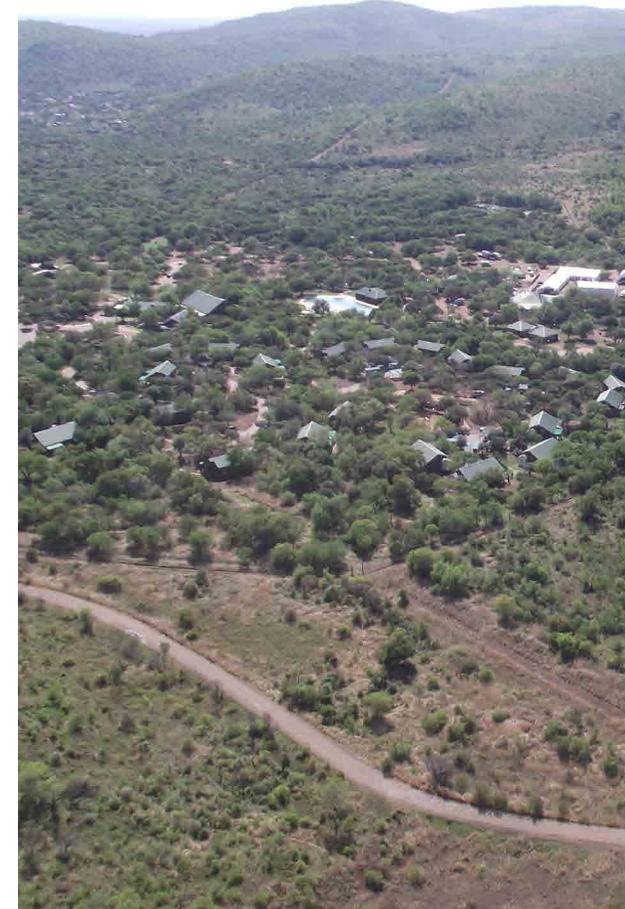
development of game meat value chains is aligned with the national Game Meat Strategy. Other actions include a focus on the consumptive use of freshwater resources, including through aquaculture, and the development of a bioprospecting, bio trade and biodiversity-based harvesting and production sectors that benefits communities.

In addressing the cross-cutting imperatives of leveraging the Biodiversity Economy to promote conservation and species and ecosystem management, the actions identified include a need to expand the area of land under conservation land use through acquisition, partnering, stewardship and OECMs. In promoting growth and transformation of the Biodiversity Economy, the actions include an imperative to develop and implement innovative partnership arrangements and context specific business models that create economies of scale and effective enterprises for communities and PDIs. Other actions under this cross-cutting imperative include:

- ▶ The identification and alleviation of key barriers of entry into large and commercially scaled biodiversity-based value chains (Ecotourism, Trophy and Recreational Hunting, Game Meat Harvesting) to enable a shift to large areas of community owned conservation land-use.
- ▶ The development and implementation of innovations, strategies, mechanisms and tools

to stimulate, capacitate and develop SMMEs within Communities and with PDIs.

- ▶ The development and implementation of a framework with mechanisms and tools for a strong role of traditional authorities in conservation land-use management and sustainable biodiversity-based enterprises.
- ▶ The development and implementation of benefit-sharing agreements that are more inclusive/ participatory for communities, and that support effective ecosystem management and conservation of community land.
- ▶ The development and implementation of innovative benefit-sharing agreements, through access and benefit sharing, that leverage private sector funding and/or non-monetary support of conservation compatible land-use and management as a foundation for localised value add.
- ▶ The development and implementation of innovative mechanisms to include EPWP (Expanded Public Works Programme) type activities into conservation and environmental management rehabilitation through cross-subsidisation.
- ▶ The development and implementation of co-management agreements that enhance participation of communities in the Biodiversity Economy programmes, based on conservation



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land use, including incorporation into larger contiguous areas.

- ▶ The development and implementation of mechanisms and tools developed to ensure access, empowerment and participation of communities and PDIs in inland fisheries and recreational fishing.

The NBES provides important guiding policy for protected area expansion and for the development and implementation of interventions associated with the biodiversity economy. It also marks the transition in thinking from Biodiversity Economy Nodes, as envisaged in earlier versions of the strategy to Mega Living Landscapes that have emerged through the development of SANParks Vision 2040.

3.5 PROVINCIAL POLICY

3.5.1 North West Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2030

The North West Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NWBSAP) outlines the province's approach to conserving biodiversity and managing its natural resources. It is intended to integrate biodiversity considerations into government planning and resource allocation. It integrates strategic objectives,

guiding principles, actionable strategies, critical programmes and projects and outreach strategies, set out in the various national and provincial policy imperatives. The NWBSAP is intended to ultimately drive the management of the NW's biodiversity and related matters. In coordination and alignment with other strategic and legislative frameworks, the NWBSAP aims to:

- ▶ Pursue conservation, tourism, and broader socio-economic growth through aligning biodiversity strategic and operational goals with the national and provincial strategic objectives.
- ▶ Integrate into the micro-, meso- and macroeconomic environments through enhancing multi-sectoral collaboration, integrated development planning, and alignment within critical implementation clusters.
- ▶ Promote cooperative partnerships to improve ecological infrastructure, ecosystem resilience, the biodiversity economy and management of this sector, skills development and transformation, resource mobilisation, and policy as well as knowledge management and evaluation within the NW.
- ▶ Unlock barriers that negatively impact the North West biodiversity mandate by promoting partnerships and prioritising interventions to

better understand the ecological infrastructure and address ecosystem resilience, the biodiversity economy and management of this sector, skills development and transformation, resource mobilisation, policy, and knowledge management and evaluation.

The NWBSAP includes seven guiding principles that reflect the values and philosophies that form its foundation. These principles complement the values adopted by the North West government and should inform planning and decision-making by all sectors of government and general stakeholders. The vision in the NWBSAP is:

“By 2030, biodiversity in the North West is to be conserved through the sustainable management thereof and utilised to provide fair and equitable benefits to all”.

The NWBSAP has three strategic objectives and two enabling strategic objectives, which cascade into outcomes and targets, which are all intended to achieve the 2030 vision. The strategic objectives are:

- ▶ SO1: Conservation and effective management of biodiversity in the North West.
- ▶ SO2: Mainstream biodiversity into policies, strategies, plans, and programmes



- ▶ SO3: A biodiversity-based economy contributes to inclusive and sustainable livelihoods and development opportunities.
- ▶ SO4: Knowledge management supports effective planning, decision-making, monitoring, evaluating, and reporting.
- ▶ SO5: Resource mobilisation enables the effective implementation of the biodiversity mandate in the province.

In pursuit of SO1, the NWBSAP recognises protected areas as a cornerstone of biodiversity conservation and identifies broad priority areas and nodes for protected area expansion.

The strategy further acknowledges that government alone lacks sufficient land and financial capacity to secure all critical biodiversity areas in the province. Therefore, it emphasises the need to enhance the Biodiversity Stewardship Programme and other initiatives that encourage conservation on privately owned land.

The NWBSAP also calls for:

- ▶ Increased efforts to expand the conservation footprint within the province.
- ▶ Effective management of existing conservation areas.
- ▶ Strengthened strategies to mitigate threats and pressures on biodiversity.

- ▶ Greater involvement of civil society, the private sector and businesses in conservation efforts. As such, the NWBSAP serves as a key strategic framework that underpins the province's biodiversity conservation efforts and provides a strong mandate for the expansion of protected areas."

3.5.2 North West Biodiversity Sector Plan

The North West Biodiversity Sector Plan 2025 (BSP) is a biodiversity conservation planning tool that is intended to integrate into multi-sectoral planning processes to streamline environmental decision-making. It provides land-use planning and decision-making guidelines for various sectors, which are intended to assist in guiding environmental impact assessments and environmental authorisations and land use planning tools such as environmental management framework and spatial development frameworks. Importantly, the Biodiversity Sector Plan identifies and spatially depicts Critical Biodiversity Areas (CBAs). These are terrestrial or aquatic areas that are identified through a systematic biodiversity planning process as being critically important for conserving biodiversity and maintaining ecosystem functioning. Essentially, they are locations that need to be protected in their natural or near-natural state to ensure the continued existence and functioning of species and ecosystems. CBAs are key informants for protected area expansion efforts as they highlight



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the areas of critically important biodiversity that must be protected. There is thus a strong relationship between the Biodiversity Sector Plan and the North West Protected Area Expansion Strategy as they are both intended to guide land use planning and biodiversity conservation efforts.

3.5.3 North West Biodiversity Economy Transformation Strategy

In response to the development of a national Biodiversity Economy Strategy, North West developed a provincial Biodiversity Economy Transformation Strategy (NW BETS) that was approved and adopted in 2018. It is intended to lead the practical, accelerated transformation of the wider wildlife, ecotourism and bio-prospecting sectors in the province. It identifies three Biodiversity Economy Nodes within the province:

- ▶ The Madikwe-Pilanesberg-Borakalalo Node (Platinum Heritage Park);
- ▶ The Molopo Node; and,
- ▶ The Marico Node.

They are intended to unlock the economic potential of protected and communal areas. Potential initiatives have been identified for each node, including opportunities for protected area expansion, wildlife product value chain development, hunting,

bioprospecting, wildlife ranching and ecotourism. The NW BETS focusses on the wildlife, ecotourism and bioprospecting sub-sectors and its objectives include growing the biodiversity sector to achieve its full potential. It is guided by the principles of the National Biodiversity Economy Strategy, which include conservation of biodiversity and ecological infrastructure. It is guided by provincial policy initiatives that are aimed at meeting the goals and objectives of the National Development Plan 2030, especially in terms of reduction of unemployment, reduction of inequality and raising of income levels. These include the Provincial Development Plan 2030, Provincial Spatial Development Framework 2017, and the Provincial Development Strategy 2018. The NW BETS is guided by the five Plan objectives listed in the Provincial Spatial Development Framework:

- ▶ Focus development on regional spatial development initiatives, development corridors, development zones and nodes.
- ▶ Protect biodiversity, water and agricultural resources.
- ▶ Promote Infrastructure Investment.
- ▶ Support economic development and job creation guiding the spatial development pattern of North West.
- ▶ Balance urbanisation and the development of rural areas within North West.

The implementation plan included in the NW BETS sets out a series of strategic actions aimed at stimulating growth and transformation and identifies seven key focus areas, one of which is protected area expansion. It includes cross-cutting strategic actions, which include:

- ▶ Strengthening collaboration among government agencies and between government and other key stakeholders involved in the development and management of the bioeconomy (including enterprise development and marketing campaigns by government e.g. for hunting tourism).
- ▶ Promote greater cooperation between Traditional Councils and Community Property Associations (CPAs) where this is needed e.g. facilitating strategic meetings.
- ▶ Improve coordination between DFFE and DRDLR, particularly around the ownership and development of restored land and CPAs.
- ▶ Develop innovative partnerships and agreements between government, NWPTB, academic institutions, development banks and the private sector to enable investment (e.g. venture capital and development funding) and capacity- building (e.g. on-site mentorship or training provided by NWU) that supports the development of emerging bioeconomy enterprises into sustainable entities, and



inclusion of women e.g. in the hunting industry.

In addressing cross-cutting issues related to protected area expansion, the NW BETS includes a strategic action to identify synergistic opportunities for the expansion of protected land in a way that benefits surrounding communities' participation in the bioeconomy. This should be undertaken within the objectives of relevant policies and strategies such as the NW PAES, the Provincial Game Donation Policy and the Biodiversity Economy Nodes; ensure the promotion of both ecological conservation and community livelihoods (e.g. sharing of Park branding and conservation management services). The NW BETS thus acknowledges the importance of protected area expansion and the role that protected areas can play in driving the North West biodiversity economy.

3.5.4 North West Parks Board Commercialisation Strategy

The North West Parks Board Commercialisation Strategy 2022 was developed in response to the need for state-owned entities to become increasingly independent of state funding. The strategy acknowledges the critical role that North West's protected areas play in nature-based tourism and the need to unlock the full potential of its tourism assets. The NWPTB generates 36.2 % of its

own funding and Pilanesberg and Madikwe Nature Reserves contribute almost 90% of the NWPTB's income. The strategy identifies the need to reduce dependence on them through improving products and management efficiencies in other protected areas.

In considering opportunities to enhance commercialisation linked to protected areas, the strategy identifies that protected areas can play a key role in economic development in the regions around them and that there are opportunities to develop community projects, funded by private enterprises. Part of the role of the commercialisation strategy is to enable protected areas to promote social and economic growth within the conservation mandate of the NWPTB. The increased involvement of important role players such as neighbouring communities, CPAs and investors in protected areas creates opportunities for meaningful beneficiation of people in the province. The objectives of the commercialisation strategy include:

- ▶ Broadening the participation of targeted stakeholder groups in economic opportunities in protected areas.
- ▶ Promoting entrepreneurship amongst communities and people of North West by offering sustainable economic opportunities.



The commercialisation strategy thus seeks to reduce the NWPTB dependence on government funding and to enable its protected areas to play a more meaningful role in the rural economy of the province, which is well aligned with the intentions of the draft national Biodiversity Economy Strategy and the NW BETS. Further protected area expansion provides the opportunity to strengthen this role and to further develop rural economic opportunities associated with protected areas.

4



CURRENT STATUS OF PROTECTED AREAS IN THE NORTH WEST PROVINCE



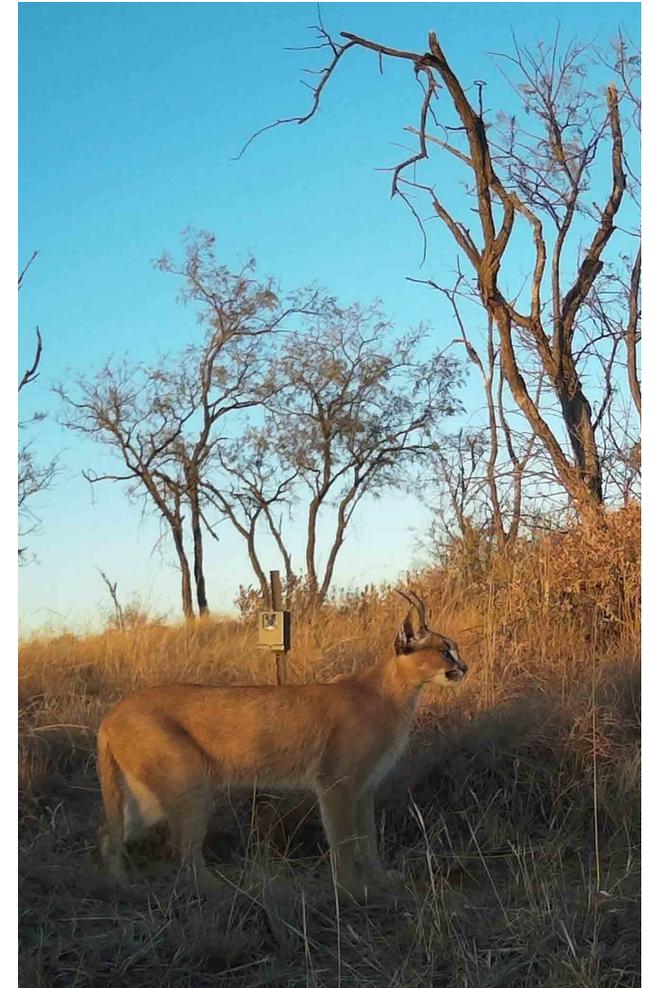
The National Protected Area and Conservation Area (PACA) database of South Africa (<https://www.dffe.gov.za/egis>) recognises protected areas contributing towards the register of protected areas of South Africa, as defined in NEMPAA, and conservation areas, which contribute towards the conservation estate but not the protected area estate. Protected areas are formally legally protected for biodiversity conservation purposes, whereas conservation areas are not formally protected in terms of NEMPAA, but are nevertheless considered to be managed, at least partly, for biodiversity conservation. Because there is no long-term legal security associated with conservation areas, they are not considered a strong form of protection.

4.1 EXISTING PROTECTED AREAS

According to the Register of Protected Areas of South Africa, the declared protected areas (Table 2 and Table 3, Figure 5) in NW Province include:

- ▶ 77 nature reserves
- ▶ Three protected environments
- ▶ One world heritage site (note that there is a second world heritage site, the Vredefort Dome, but as it has not been proclaimed in terms of South Africa's World Heritage Convention Act, 1999, it is not legally recognised as a protected area in terms of NEMPAA and is thus not included in the Register of Protected Areas).

Approximately 3.8% of the province falls within formally protected areas (Type 1, 2 and 5 as listed in Table 2). In comparison, South Africa's protected area network covers approximately 9.8% of the country's land surface. An additional 7.76% is designated as biosphere reserves, world heritage sites and conservancies (Table 2) bringing the total NW PAN extent to 11.42%.



CURRENT STATUS OF PROTECTED AREAS IN NORTH WEST PROVINCE

4.

Table 2. A summary of the NW PAN per protected area type category. See Table 5 for description of protected area types as used in the NW

PA Type 3 and 4	PA Type 1, 2, 5 and 6	Total Area (ha)	% of Province
Type 3 PA (World Heritage Site)	Type 5 (Private Nature Reserves)	3,207	0.03
	WHS only	126,078	1.2
Type 3 PA (World Heritage Site) Total		129 285	1.23
Type 4 (Biosphere Reserve)	Type 5 (Private Nature Reserves)	6,049	0.06
	Biosphere only	680,311	6.48
Type 4 (Biosphere Reserve) Total		686,359	6.54
Not in WHS or biosphere	Type 1 PA (Formal)	207,128	1.97
	Type 2 PA (Protected Environment)	47,217	0.45
	Type 5 (Private Nature Reserves)	120,620	1.15
	Type 6 Conservation Area (Conservancies)	7,040	0.07
Not in WHS or biosphere Total		382,004	3.64
Total coverage of PA in the NW		1,197,648	11.42

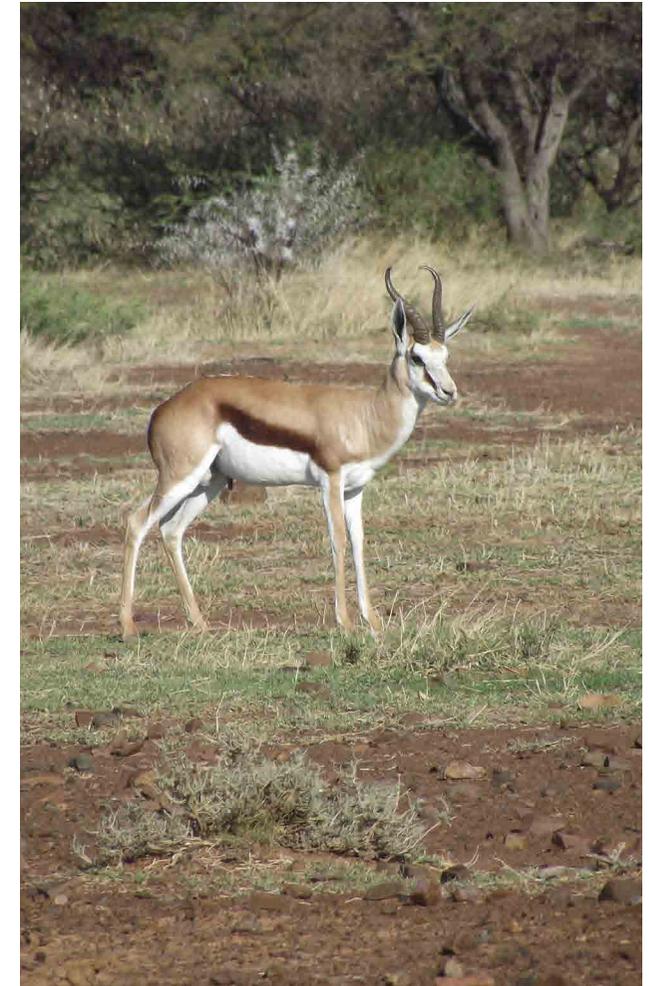
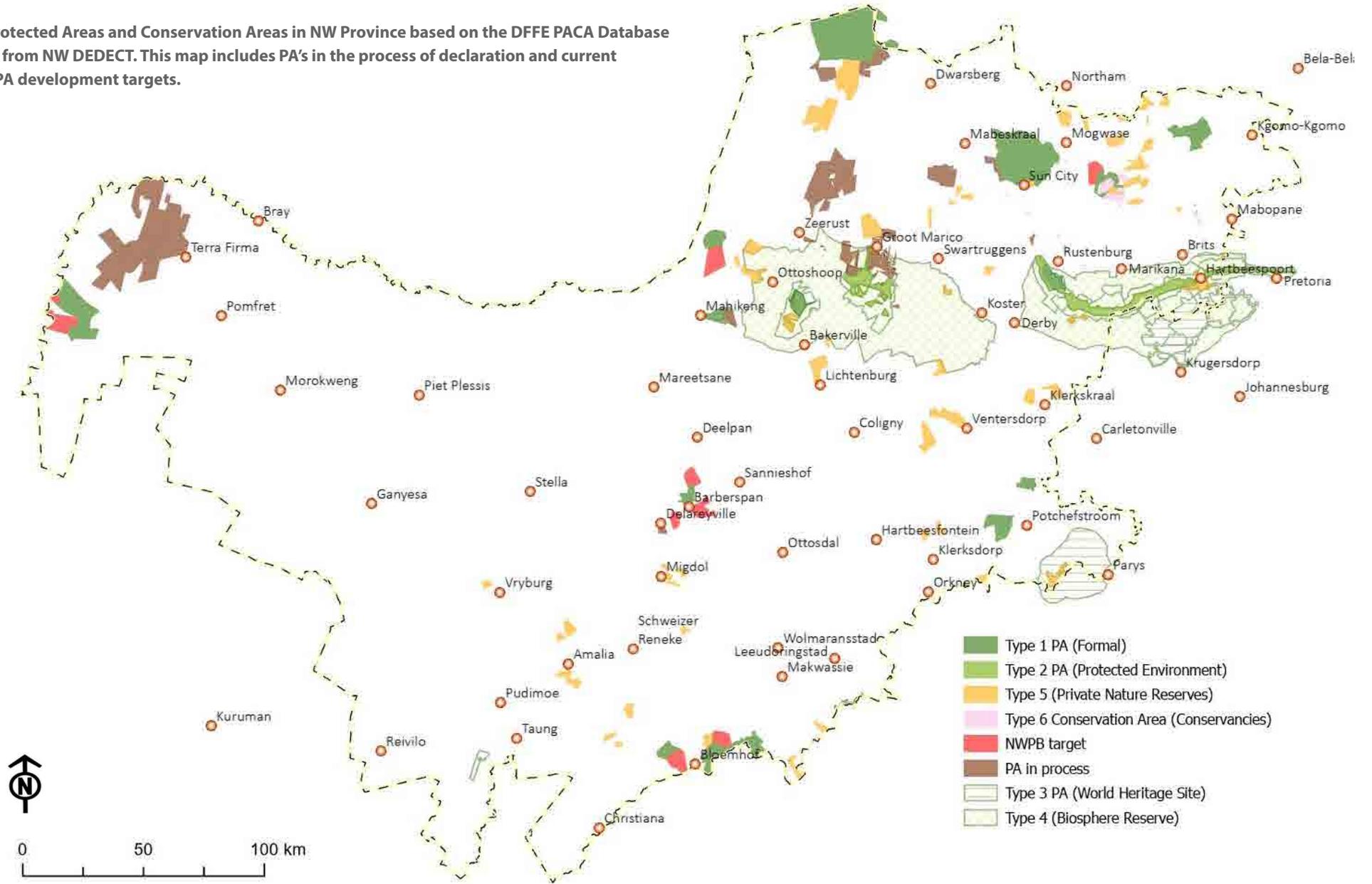


Figure 5. Protected Areas and Conservation Areas in NW Province based on the DFFE PACA Database plus inputs from NW DEDECT. This map includes PA's in the process of declaration and current provincial PA development targets.



CURRENT STATUS OF PROTECTED AREAS IN NORTH WEST PROVINCE

Table 3A. Declared protected areas in NW Province

PROTECTED AREAS AND CONSERVATION AREAS	AREA IN NW (HA.)	MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY
Type 1 Protected Areas (Statutory or Formal)	207,170	NWPTB
Barberspan Nature Reserve	3,156	NWPTB
Bloemhof Dam Nature Reserve	14,942	NWPTB
Borakalalo Nature Reserve	11,974	NWPTB
Boskopdam Nature Reserve	3,070	NWPTB
Botsalano Nature Reserve	5,673	NWPTB
Highveld Nature Reserve	8,616	NWPTB
Kgaswane Mountain Reserve	5,497	NWPTB
Madikwe Nature Reserve	60,732	NWPTB
Mafikeng Nature Reserve	4,613	NWPTB
Molemane Nature Reserve	5,256	NWPTB
Molopo Nature Reserve	24,020	NWPTB
Pilanesberg Nature Reserve	49,583	NWPTB
S.A. Lombard Nature Reserve	3,637	NWPTB
Vaalkopdam Nature Reserve	4,658	NWPTB
Wolwespruit Nature Reserve	1,743	NWPTB
Type 2: Protected Environments	41,593	
Magaliesberg Protected Environment	27,080	DEDECT and GDARDE
Marico Protected Environment	14,513	Marico River Conservation Association
Type 3: World Heritage Sites	59,828	
Fossil Hominid Sites of SA: Cradle of Humankind World Heritage Site	8,834	GDARDE
Taung Skull World Heritage Site	3,627	DEDECT
Taung Skull Site (Core) (Protected Area Estate)	159	DEDECT
Taung Skull Site (Buffer)	3,468	DEDECT

PROTECTED AREAS AND CONSERVATION AREAS	AREA IN NW (HA.)	MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY
Vredefort Dome World Heritage Site	47,368	DEDECT
Type 4: Biosphere Reserves	666,957	
Magaliesberg Biosphere Reserve	219,462	Magaliesberg Biosphere Reserve Non-Profit Company
Marico Biosphere Reserve	447,495	Marico River Conservation Association
Type 5: Private and Municipal Nature Reserves		
Municipal Reserves	2,065	
Faan Meintjies Nature Reserve	1,189	City of Matlosana Local Municipality
Leon Taljaard Nature Reserve	876	Naledi Local Municipality
Private Nature Reserves in Type 1 Reserves (Need to be de-proclaimed)	14,029	
Weldere Private Nature Reserve (Madikwe)	10,975	
McGregor Private Nature Reserve (2083 Ha. in Pilanesberg)	3054	
See Table 3B for other Private Nature Reserves		
Types 6: Conservancies		
Conservancies (Total Area in WHS) Type 3/4/6	6,479	
Conservancies (Total Area Outside MPE & WHS + PNR) Type 4/6	31,877	



Table 3B. Private Nature Reserves in the North West Province (Type 5) and percentage modification >60% - RED shaded cells, 41-60% - ORANGE shaded cells, 20-40% - YELLOW shaded cells

PRIVATE NATURE RESERVE	TOTAL AREA (HA)	MODIFIED 2023 (%)
Arabos Private Nature Reserve	586	6
Atorus Private Nature Reserve	1,043	53
Bettie Private Nature Reserve	966	7.1
Bochco Private Nature Reserve	810	7.0
Bosworth Private Nature Reserve	1,212	32
Burger Private Nature Reserve	1,102	3.9
Bushybend Private Nature Reserve	1,131	5.4
Dawie Pieterse Private Nature Reserve	830	5.0
Deon Private Nature Reserve	3,139	13
Drie Annies Private Nature Reserve	5,746	20
Druprenella Private Nature Reserve	3,549	32
Eerstbegin Private Nature Reserve	1,576	73
Elma Private Nature Reserve	157	33
Faan Meintjies Private Nature Reserve	1,188	29
Flintbeck Private Nature Reserve	405	33
Flovin Mauken Private Nature Reserve	1,257	1
Franko Private Nature Reserve	1,640	4
Fred Coetzee Private Nature Reserve	2,397	0.6
Goedgevonden Private Nature Reserve	894	65
Hans Engelbrecht Private Nature Reserve	952	8
Hartbeespoort Dam Nature Reserve	3,627	80
Hillendale Private Nature Reserve	1,305	8
Hillhoff Private Nature Reserve	1,060	3
Hoffman Private Nature Reserve	2,246	72
Honingspruit Private Nature Reserve	2,228	4.8
J. H. Klopper Private Nature Reserve	639	70
Kareesloot Private Nature Reserve	1,898	6.7
King Fisher's Kingdom Private Nature Reserve	1,038	48
Klipfontein Private Nature Reserve	906	30
Klipkuil Private Nature Reserve	1,484	24
Klipplaat Private Nature Reserve	543	6
Klipstraat Private Nature Reserve	2,105	2
Koos Meintjies Private Nature Reserve	1,719	35
Koos Meyer Private Nature Reserve	1,701	42
Koos Swart Private Nature Reserve	5,405	9
Kosmo Private Nature Reserve	1,854	25
Krokodil Private Nature Reserve	957	19

PRIVATE NATURE RESERVE	TOTAL AREA (HA)	MODIFIED 2023 (%)
Leon Taljaard Nature Reserve	876	11
Lichtenburg Game Breeding Centre	5,142	13
M. D. Viljoen Private Nature Reserve	703	93
M. J. Hermann Private Nature Reserve	1,382	5
Makokskraal Private Nature Reserve	4,522	33
Marico-Bosveld Nature Reserve	6,688	22
Marokane Private Nature Reserve	745	1
Matlapeng Private Nature Reserve	4,838	41
McGregor Private Nature Reserve	3,051	15
M'Nandi Private Nature Reserve	285	48
Molopo Oog Private Nature Reserve	1,497	7
Nellie Private Nature Reserve	784	0.2
Nooitgedacht Private Nature Reserve	2,576	24
Olyvenbult Private Nature Reserve	3,225	3
Quarry Private Nature Reserve	682	44
Rall Broers Private Nature Reserve	416	2
Rietspruit Rusoord Nature Reserve	289	4
Rustig No 1 Private Nature Reserve	662	7
Rustig No 2 Private Nature Reserve	1,432	45
Schoonspruit Nature Reserve	4,341	36
Somerville Private Nature Reserve	2,724	2
Sterkfontein Private Nature Reserve	854	0.7
Stroomdrift Private Nature Reserve	1,417	73
Thabaphiri Private Nature Reserve	237	38
Thys Snyman Private Nature Reserve	768	31
Tiekie Private Nature Reserve	533	19
Tweekoppiesfontein Private Nature Reserve	13,864	8.4
Uitspan Private Nature Reserve	454	76
Vaalbosch Private Nature Reserve	517	19
Venterskroon Private Nature Reserve	630	5
Voorbrand Private Nature Reserve	860	17
Voorspoed Private Nature Reserve	653	71
Vuurfontein Private Nature Reserve	1,695	28
Weldere Private Nature Reserve	10,876	15
Witkrans Private Nature Reserve	1,936	20
Total area	143,447	

CURRENT STATUS OF PROTECTED AREAS IN NORTH WEST PROVINCE

4.2 EXISTING CONSERVATION AREAS

In addition to its protected areas, the PACA database (<https://www.dffe.gov.za/egis>) identifies that there are two Biosphere Reserves designated by UNESCO, in terms of its Man and Biosphere Programme, in the NW. These are the Magaliesberg Biosphere Reserve and the Marico Biosphere Reserve.

Biosphere reserves consist of three zones:

- ▶ The core area(s) comprise strictly protected ecosystems (protected areas).
- ▶ The buffer zone surrounds or adjoins the core areas and is used for ecological practices.
- ▶ The transition area is the part of the reserve where most economic activity is allowed.

It must be noted that although the DFFE includes entire biosphere reserves, including core areas, buffer zones and transition areas, in its PACA database, the core areas are generally protected areas so would contribute towards protected area targets but the buffer zones and transition areas do not meet the criteria to be considered OECMs and thus do not contribute towards the achievement of conservation and protected area targets, such as Target 3 of the GBF. There is thus a need to undertake measures to expand the core areas or to apply measures that ensure that the buffer zones meet the OECM criteria.

4.3 HOW WELL DO NW PROTECTED AREAS CONTRIBUTE TO ACHIEVING CONSERVATION GOALS?

How well the NW PAN contributes to achieving conservation goals is measured by calculating the proportion of the national vegetation type (ecosystem) target that is achieved within the PAN. This is called ecosystem levels of protection. National conservation targets have been set for each vegetation type in South Africa and prescribe the amount (ha) of each vegetation type that should be formally protected to make a representative PAN (i.e. represent the variety of habitats, communities and species that make up that vegetation type). It should be noted, however, that these targets are likely to be increased in response to South Africa's obligations in terms of the Global Biodiversity Framework, particularly Target 3 (30x30).

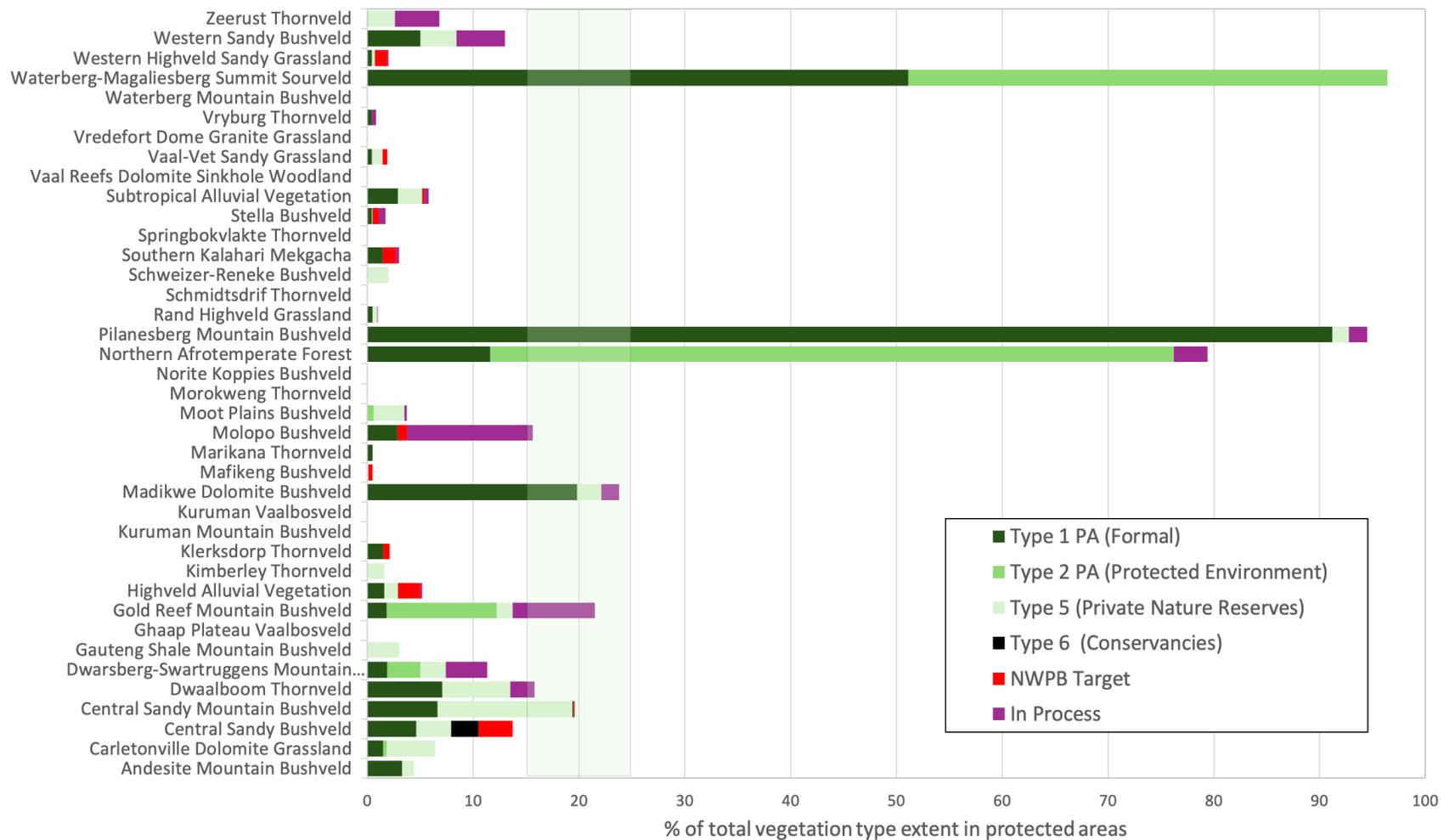
Currently the NW PAN achieves about 18% of vegetation type conservation targets. The ecosystem levels of protection area summarised in figure 6 and Table 4.

Only 3 of the 39 ecosystems in the province are well conserved and 9 ecosystems are not represented in any PA. Ecosystems that are below their target provide a clear direction for where to focus PA development (see Section 7.5)





Figure 6. The percentage of each ecosystem within the NW protected area network. The green band represents the biodiversity conservation target range for ecosystems.



CURRENT STATUS OF PROTECTED AREAS IN NORTH WEST PROVINCE

Table 4. Levels of protection (% of conservation target achieved) for South African vegetation type achieved by the NW PAN.

Vegetation Type Name	Endemicity	Original Extent (ha)	Remaining Area (ha)	% Remaining Area	Conservation Target (% of original extent)	Conservation Target Amount (ha)	Total Area in PA (ha)	Total Area in PA (% of original extent of vegetation type)	% of Target Achieved	Level of Protection	Type 1 PA (Formal)	Type 2 PA (Protected Environment)	Type 5 (Private Nature Reserves)	Type 6 (Conservancies)	NWPB Target	In Process
Andesite Mountain Bushveld	55.7	179,525	144,761	80.6	24	43,086	7,850	4.4	18.3	Poorly protected	3.3	0	1.1	0	0	0
Carletonville Dolomite Grassland	67.8	570,807	421,750	73.9	24	136,994	36,902	6.5	27.1	Poorly protected	1.5	0.3	4.6	0	0	0
Central Sandy Bushveld	16	265,078	203,491	76.8	19	50,365	36,625	13.8	72.6	Moderately protected	4.6	0	3.3	2.6	3.2	0
Central Sandy Mountain Bushveld	76.8	29,248	28,188	96.4	19	5,557	5,700	19.5	102.6	Well protected	6.6	0	12.8	0.1	0.1	0
Dwaalboom Thornveld	39.8	259,363	184,297	71.1	19	49,279	41,092	15.8	83.2	Moderately protected	7.1	0	6.4	0	0	2.3
Dwarsberg-Swartruggens Mountain Bushveld	98.6	409,060	350,527	85.7	24	98,174	46,084	11.3	47.1	Poorly protected	1.9	3.1	2.4	0	0	3.9
Gauteng Shale Mountain Bushveld	45.1	64,632	41,528	64.3	24	15,512	1,921	3	12.5	Poorly protected	0	0	3	0	0	0
Ghaap Plateau Vaalbosveld	31.9	422,244	401,487	95.1	16	67,559	5	0	0	Not protected	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gold Reef Mountain Bushveld	74.5	229,925	195,533	85	24	55,182	49,410	21.5	89.6	Moderately protected	1.8	10.4	1.5	0	0	7.8
Highveld Alluvial Vegetation	10	426,331	277,515	65.1	31	132,163	21,946	5.1	16.5	Poorly protected	1.6	0	1.3	0	2.1	0.2
Kimberley Thornveld	11.4	190,396	161,098	84.6	16	30,463	3,088	1.6	10	Poorly protected	0	0	1.6	0	0	0
Klerksdorp Thornveld	100	343,903	174,402	50.7	24	82,537	7,626	2.2	9.2	Poorly protected	1.5	0	0	0	0.6	0
Kuruman Mountain Bushveld	21.2	123,199	102,614	83.3	16	19,712	0	0	0	Not protected	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kuruman Vaalbosveld	13.5	45,690	43,592	95.4	16	7,310	0	0	0	Not protected	0	0	0	0	0	0
Madikwe Dolomite Bushveld	76.3	83,567	80,308	96.1	19	15,878	19,831	23.7	124.7	Well protected	19.8	0	2.3	0	0	1.7
Mafikeng Bushveld	90.8	1,353,193	998,067	73.8	16	216,511	6,658	0.5	3.1	Not protected	0	0	0.1	0	0.4	0
Marikana Thornveld	57.1	127,055	32,810	25.8	19	24,140	630	0.5	2.6	Not protected	0.5	0	0	0	0	0
Molopo Bushveld	57.6	784,370	759,184	96.8	16	125,499	122,716	15.6	97.5	Moderately protected	2.8	0	0	0	1	11.8
Moot Plains Bushveld	77.7	139,695	56,596	40.5	19	26,542	5,071	3.6	18.9	Poorly protected	0	0.6	2.9	0	0	0.2
Morokweng Thornveld	100	100,159	94,045	93.9	16	16,025	0	0	0	Not protected	0	0	0	0	0	0
Norite Koppies Bushveld	85.4	41,913	30,158	72	24	10,059	29	0.1	0.4	Not protected	0	0	0.1	0	0	0



Vegetation Type Name	Endemicity	Original Extent (ha)	Remaining Area (ha)	% Remaining Area	Conservation Target (% of original extent)	Conservation Target Amount (ha)	Total Area in PA (ha)	Total Area in PA (% of original extent of vegetation type)	% of Target Achieved	Level of Protection	Type 1 PA (Formal)	Type 2 PA (Protected Environment)	Type 5 (Private Nature Reserves)	Type 6 (Conservancies)	NWMPB Target	In Process
Northern Afrotropical Forest	10.9	2,333	2,253	96.6	22	513	1,851	79.3	360.5	Well protected	11.6	64.6	0	0	0	3.2
Pilanesberg Mountain Bushveld	100	36,687	35,645	97.2	24	8,805	34,649	94.4	393.3	Well protected	91.2	0	1.6	0	0	1.7
Rand Highveld Grassland	29	265,022	81,911	30.9	24	63,605	2,476	0.9	3.8	Not protected	0.5	0	0.4	0	0	0.1
Schmidtsdrif Thornveld	13.4	66,077	46,087	69.7	16	10,572	0	0	0	Not protected	0	0	0	0	0	0
Schweizer-Reneke Bushveld	100	133,543	51,276	38.4	16	21,367	2,641	2	12.5	Poorly protected	0	0	2	0	0	0
Southern Kalahari Mekgacha	0	126,029	87,904	69.7	24	30,247	3,783	3	12.5	Poorly protected	1.4	0	0	0	1.3	0.3
Springbokvlakte Thornveld	3.4	22,491	4,560	20.3	19	4,273	0	0	0	Not protected	0	0	0	0	0	0
Stella Bushveld	100	402,108	296,656	73.8	16	64,337	6,517	1.6	10	Poorly protected	0.4	0	0.1	0	0.6	0.6
Subtropical Alluvial Vegetation	10	69,526	44,044	63.3	31	21,553	4,075	5.9	19	Poorly protected	2.9	0	2.3	0	0.2	0.4
Vaal Reefs Dolomite Sinkhole Woodland	85.2	26,543	15,941	60.1	24	6,370	0	0	0	Not protected	0	0	0	0	0	0
Vaal-Vet Sandy Grassland	43.2	1,033,728	174,145	16.8	24	248,095	19,765	1.9	7.9	Poorly protected	0.4	0	1	0	0.5	0
Vredefort Dome Granite Grassland	6	4,450	1,614	36.3	24	1,068	0	0	0	Not protected	0	0	0	0	0	0
Vryburg Thornveld	96.7	646,260	293,038	45.3	16	103,402	4,984	0.8	5	Not protected	0.4	0	0	0	0	0.4
Waterberg Mountain Bushveld	0.1	524	339	64.7	24	126	0	0	0	Not protected	0	0	0	0	0	0
Waterberg-Magaliesberg Summit Sourveld	4.2	2,159	2,131	98.7	24	518	2,081	96.4	401.7	Well protected	51.1	45.3	0	0	0	0
Western Highveld Sandy Grassland	100	734,949	217,545	29.6	24	176,388	14,282	1.9	7.9	Poorly protected	0.4	0	0.3	0	1.2	0.1
Western Sandy Bushveld	51.5	579,918	409,599	70.6	19	110,184	75,066	12.9	67.9	Moderately protected	5	0	3.4	0	0	4.6
Zeerust Thornveld	99.7	131,324	80,528	61.3	19	24,951	8,863	6.7	35.3	Poorly protected	0	0.1	2.5	0	0	4.2
TOTAL		10,473,025	6,627,169	63.3		2,124,921	594,217	5.7			1.8	0.4	1.2	0.1	0.5	1.7

Original Extent - Derived from the NW Vegetation Map
 Remaining Area - Derived from the NW Land Cover
 Conservation Target - Target from the National Vegetation Map

CURRENT STATUS OF PROTECTED AREAS IN NORTH WEST PROVINCE

4.4 NEMPAA COMPLIANCE

Just five of the nature reserves and two of the protected environments, covering a total of 27,206 hectares or 0.26% of the NW's area, were declared after NEMPAA was promulgated in 2004. Most of the protected areas in the NW were thus declared prior to the promulgation of NEMPAA under historic provincial or Bantustan legislation. In terms of section 12 of NEMPAA, which deals with protected areas declared in terms of provincial legislation, these areas would be regarded as nature reserves or protected environments for the purposes of the Act. However, the Norms and Standards for the Inclusion of Private Nature Reserves in the Register of Protected Areas in South Africa (hereafter referred to as the Norms and Standards), prepared in terms of section 11 of NEMPAA, require a process to verify and validate private nature reserves that were declared in terms of historic legislation preceding the promulgation of NEMPAA.

The Norms and Standards set out the process to verify the existence of a private nature reserve, which require the completion of a remote sensing review to determine whether the natural habitat has been modified, through cultivation, mining, infrastructure development etc. The provincial organ of state responsible for nature conservation is then required to conduct site visits to verify the remote sensing

assessment, with the ultimate purpose being to verify that the private nature reserve still has biodiversity attributes and is being managed in such a way that it would continue to be regarded as a nature reserve in terms of sections 12 and 23(5) of NEMPAA. Clause 5(6) of the Norms and Standards provides that "where there is significant degradation or changes in the attributes of a site that are irremediable, the Minister or MEC may withdraw the status of a private nature." This is important, as it has been found that many of the historically declared private nature reserves in South Africa have not been managed as protected areas and have been developed for agricultural or other purposes to the extent that their biodiversity attributes have been compromised and they would no longer qualify to be regarded as nature reserves.

Given that most of the protected areas in the NW have been declared in this way, it is important to understand whether they continue to contain important biodiversity attributes and function as protected areas. In instances where they do not, a process to de-proclaim them must be instituted and they must be removed from the Register of Protected Areas of South Africa. This has obvious implications for the achievement of protected area targets and for the setting of protected area expansion targets, as the withdrawal of an existing private nature reserve would require the protection of an additional area of the vegetation type(s) in which it is located to achieve the protected area expansion target.

Validation of private nature reserves in terms of the Norms and Standards, requires a process to regularise the historically declared protected areas in terms of NEMPAA. At the very least this requires that the MEC assign a management authority to the private nature reserve in accordance with section 38(2) (a) of NEMPAA and that the assigned management authority prepare a management plan for the private nature reserve in accordance with sections 39, 40 and 41 of NEMPAA. It also requires that the protected area status of the private nature reserve be endorsed on the title deeds of the property, in accordance with section 36 of NEMPAA.

In line with the norms and standards for including private nature reserves in the national register of protected areas, the NWP has begun validating these areas. Preliminary land cover change analyses indicate that 13% (n=9) of private nature reserves have experienced over 60% transformation of their declared area. Additionally, 13% (n=13) and 10% (n=10) of reserves have undergone transformation of 20–30% and 40–50% respectively (Table 3b). Encouragingly, just over 53% (n=38) of private nature reserves remain largely intact, with transformation of only 0–19%. The process of validating Type 5 private nature reserves must be concluded to provide a more accurate understanding of the North West Province's conservation estate.



These processes are important, because they ensure that the protected area does not exist in name only but that it has a responsible entity assigned to manage it in accordance with a formally approved management plan that complies with the provisions of NEMPAA, and the status of the protected area is reflected on the title deeds of the properties concerned. If these processes are not undertaken, there is no certainty that the biodiversity attributes of a private nature reserve will be protected and there will be no accountability in its management.

4.5 INSTITUTIONAL ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF PROTECTED AREAS

The management of protected areas is undertaken by the management authorities assigned to manage them. The minister has the discretion to assign management authorities to various types of protected areas, in accordance with section 38(1) of NEMPAA, whilst the MEC must assign the management of a nature reserve to a suitable person, organisation or organ of state (S38(2)(a)) and may assign a management authority to a protected environment (S38(2)(b)). Although there are no national parks declared in the NW, NEMPAA stipulates that the minister must assign the management of a national park to South African National Parks (SANParks).

In the case of existing state-owned and administered protected areas in the NW, NWPTB would be the assigned management authority, as it is delegated with the responsibility of biodiversity conservation, including the management of state-owned provincial protected areas. In the case of protected areas declared on private land and state-owned communal land, the management authority that is assigned by the minister or the MEC would be at the discretion of the landowner(s) or the land rights

holders. It must be noted that these management authorities carry the same responsibilities in terms of NEMPAA that the NWPTB does for the management of the state-owned provincial protected areas. They are required to develop and manage the protected areas in accordance with the provisions of NEMPAA, its regulations and other policy documents such as norms and standards. The same would apply for municipal protected areas.

Table 5. Protected Area types used in the NW

For planning purposes the NW adopts an inclusive definition of what is considered a protected area and conservation area. This includes areas declared in terms of the Protected Areas Act (National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act, 2003 [Act No. 57 of 2003]) as well as areas not declared in terms of the act.

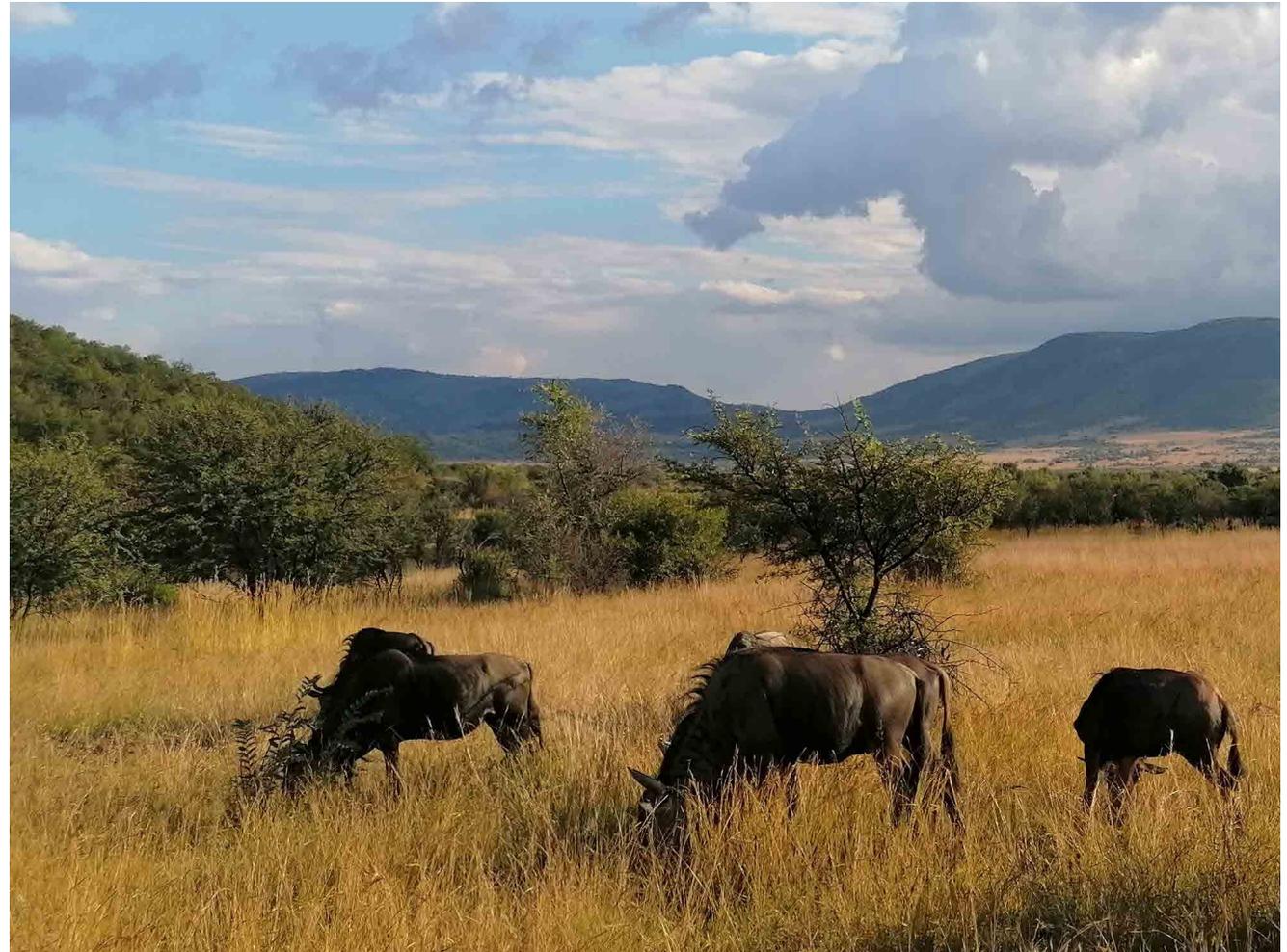
Type of protected area	Management Authority
Type 1	Nature reserves, and national parks. Protected areas formally proclaimed in terms of the Protected Areas Act.
Type 2	Protected environments. Protected areas formally proclaimed in terms of the Protected Areas Act.
Type 3	World heritage sites. Conservation areas formally proclaimed in terms of the World Heritage Convention Act, No. 49 of 1999.
Type 4	Biosphere reserves. Conservation areas formally recognised by UNESCO in terms of its Man and Biosphere Programme.
Type 5	Private nature reserves. Legacy conservation areas not proclaimed in terms of the Protected Areas Act that may or may not be managed as de facto protected areas.
Type 6	Conservancies. Voluntary conservation areas established and managed by private land owners and not formally proclaimed in terms of the Protected Areas Act.

CURRENT STATUS OF PROTECTED AREAS IN NORTH WEST PROVINCE

4.6 EFFECTIVENESS OF PROTECTED AREA MANAGEMENT

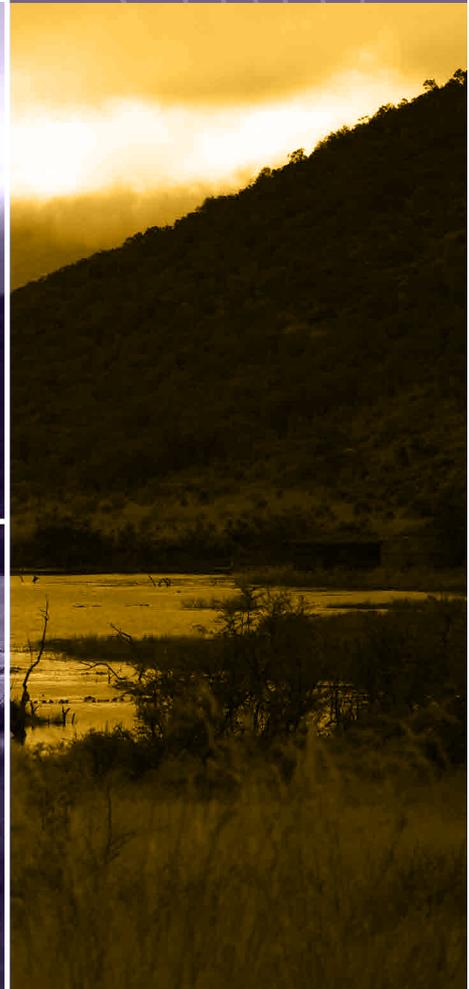
The first national assessment of protected area management effectiveness in South Africa was conducted in 2010 (Cowan, Mpongoma & Britton, 2010). Since then, annual Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) assessments have been consistently carried out for the fifteen Type 1 protected areas in the NWP. Over six years, the NWPTB achieved an average METT score of 60%, falling below the national sound management benchmark of 67%.

In 2017, the NWPTB met an annual METT target of 71%. However, Pilanesberg Nature Reserve (67%) and Molemane Eye Nature Reserve (69%) achieved average scores at or above the benchmark over the six-year period. The remaining 13 PAs scored between 33% and 67%, indicating basic management with significant deficiencies. It is important to include other protected areas not managed by the North West Parks and Tourism Board in the annual METT assessments. This would provide the competent authority with a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of management across the entire North West conservation estate.





**WHY ARE PROTECTED AREAS
IMPORTANT? MAKING THE CASE
FOR BIODIVERSITY**



WHY ARE PROTECTED AREAS IMPORTANT?

5.

MAKING THE CASE FOR BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION



5.1 PROTECTED AREAS AND THE RURAL ECONOMY

South Africa and the NW's biodiversity is a national asset that contributes to human well-being, economic prosperity and climate resilience. As highlighted above, biodiversity is fundamental to human wellbeing, underpinning food production, medicine, energy, clean air and water, security from natural disasters and supporting many recreational and cultural pursuits. It supports all systems of life on earth.

Biodiversity and the protected areas that secure it, is the backbone of South Africa's biodiversity economy, driving tourism, the wildlife ranching sector and other related industries. Iconic protected areas such as Table Mountain National Park and the Kruger National Park are primary drivers of international tourism and the foreign exchange flows that they bring into the country. Similarly, the NW's large iconic protected areas such as Madikwe and the Pilanesberg play an important role in driving local, national and international tourism in the province.



The establishment of protected areas frequently results in multiple other benefits, in addition to protecting biodiversity. There are outstanding examples of protected areas on communal land being primary drivers of rural economic development providing jobs and business opportunities for the community members involved. Protected areas provide the opportunity to re-frame rural economic development in South Africa, placing it on a sustainable trajectory that can lead to meaningful improvements in livelihoods and social well-being. Protected areas provide the legal protection and the foundation for the types of interventions and investments required to drive sustainable rural economic development.

Protected areas provide the obvious platform when considering initiatives linked to the biodiversity economy, sustainable rangeland management and other forms of agriculture, ecological restoration linked to the provision of essential ecosystem services and new and emerging forms of innovative finance, such as the provision of carbon and biodiversity credits. The legal status of protected areas provides security for the types of investments made, as does the presence of a management authority, which is an established legal entity with which investors can engage and enter into partnerships. The adoption of a management plan and its implementation provides a framework for good management of such areas and embeds mechanisms that ensure oversight and accountability. Protected areas thus provide a level of security, particularly in the context of communal land, which provides an ability to leverage private sector investment and local and international grant funding.

The White Paper on Conservation and Sustainable Use of South Africa's Biodiversity and other key policy documents, such as the NBES, are re-framing the character of biodiversity conservation and protected area expansion in South Africa. This has been acknowledged by SANParks through the recent launch of its Vision 2040, which places people at the heart of conservation. Examples of this new thinking are being seen in the development of the new Grasslands National Park in the Rhodes region of the Eastern Cape, which is being developed in partnership with private landowners and communal land rights holders, without SANParks owning any of the land concerned. The national park is intended to remain a working agricultural landscape that will continue to provide multiple benefits to its stakeholders, particularly the communities associated with it.

Similarly, the establishment of the Maloti Thaba Tsa Metsi Protected Environment, which falls across the administrative areas of five traditional authorities in the Eastern Cape, is providing multiple benefits to the communities involved through sustainable rangeland management and other forms of sustainable resource use, ecological restoration of critical ecological infrastructure and tourism development. The recent declaration of the 20,000-hectare Babanango Game Reserve in KwaZulu-Natal as a nature reserve provides an excellent example of the role that the wildlife economy can play in providing multiple benefits to communities. Significant investments have been made in this nature reserve in the form of the development of new lodges and supporting infrastructure, including roads, bridges and administration facilities. Over three-quarters of the nature reserve is

communally owned through a land restitution process and the land claim beneficiaries benefit as business partners in the tourism ventures established in the nature reserve, through an innovative wildlife ownership model, through lease fees paid for lodges and other infrastructure in the nature reserve and through direct employment with approximately 250 jobs having been created in a particularly poor region of KwaZulu-Natal. The legal protection provided by the protected area declarations has in all of these cases provided security for the investments being made in them, whether they are in the development of wildlife economy initiatives, large-scale ecological restoration initiatives, the generation of carbon credits or certified sustainable rangeland management initiatives, such as the adoption of the Responsible Wool Standard in the Grasslands National Park and the Maloti Thaba Tsa Metsi Protected Environment.

The business case and value proposition for protected area expansion entails much more than the conservation of biodiversity. It provides a platform for completely re-shaping rural economic development in South Africa, leading to far greater, equitable benefits for the rural poor.

WHY ARE PROTECTED AREAS IMPORTANT?

5. MAKING THE CASE FOR BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION



5.2 ECOLOGICAL BENEFITS

5.2.1 Biodiversity conservation

The primary objective of the protected area system in South Africa, is the conservation of biodiversity. The state is constitutionally obligated to maintain a safe and healthy environment for its citizens. Conserving representative examples of all of South Africa's ecosystems for the benefit of current and future generations is a fundamental obligation of the state. The protected area system is the primary mechanism whereby the state achieves this objective.

5.2.2 Ecological sustainability

Protected areas are core nodes in ecological infrastructure networks. Within protected areas the primary land-use management objective is the maintenance and persistence of biodiversity and ecological processes. As such these areas are assured of delivering the maximum ecological service benefits to society, both now and indefinitely into the future. They are effectively the only place in the landscape where these benefits are guaranteed. In transitional or production landscapes outside of protected areas these benefits are not guaranteed. These nodes can also be sources for threatened species, which can ostensibly replace losses in sink areas outside these areas, i.e. rescue effect.

5.2.3 Water Security

A well-designed protected area system can contribute to securing the quality and quantity of water supplies. The water provisioning and regulating aspects of ecosystems is a part of ecological sustainability. However, given the fundamental importance of the availability of quality water to human well-being and economic prosperity, it is useful to highlight the contribution of protected areas to water security.

Protected areas can protect water catchment areas. Furthermore, the intact rivers and wetlands within protected areas regulate and clean water, thereby improving the quality of the resource for downstream users. Under the current context of diminishing water availability and quality being experienced in South Africa, this benefit of protected areas may become one of the more compelling arguments in support of them. South Africa's historical water catchment areas show that the water supply benefit of these areas was recognised long before the biodiversity benefit (e.g. mountain catchments of the south-western Cape).



5.2.4 Climate Change Resilience

It is recognised that intact ecosystems (i.e., ecosystems which are in a natural or near-natural state) withstand stresses better than highly modified and fragmented landscapes and offer a buffer to human settlements against extreme events caused by climate change. In addition, healthy ecosystems may assist species to adapt more naturally, thus contributing to their survival and the survival of the ecosystem.

Healthy, intact freshwater ecosystems are vital for maintaining resilience to climate change and mitigating its impact on human wellbeing. In the western part of South Africa, which is likely to become drier, intact rivers and wetlands will help to maintain a consistent supply of water. On the other hand, in the eastern part of the country, which is likely to become wetter, intact rivers and wetlands will be important for reducing flood risk and mitigating the impacts of flash floods.

Investing in the Wildlife Economy is a Good Climate Change Adaptation Strategy.

Investing in the wildlife economy is a good climate change adaptation strategy aimed at promoting food security and rural economies particularly in a province that has significant areas of marginal agricultural land. Indigenous wildlife are better adapted to local climates and are more tolerant of marginal agricultural conditions. The commercial wildlife ranching industry has transformed 20 million hectares of marginal agricultural land in South Africa into thriving land-use operations giving average returns of R220/ha of economic output, compared to an average R80/ha for conventional livestock farming.

It is recognised that the protected area system is central to maintaining the gene-pool that is the cornerstone of the wildlife economy. The protected area system can also provide the backbone of an economic strategy aimed at adapting the economy of North West province to the impacts of climate change.

5.3 SOCIAL & CULTURAL BENEFITS

5.3.1 Rural Development

- ▶ Protected areas provide **nodes/platforms for rural development**, especially in agriculturally marginal areas (which is much of the country, and often where protected areas are located).
- ▶ Protected areas **diversify and multiply rural livelihood options**.
- ▶ Protected areas are economically connected, as well as ecologically connected, to their surrounding context.
- ▶ Protected areas have an economic footprint in their immediate area. In many cases protected areas don't currently have the capacity to expand their local supply chains but have the potential to make a much greater contribution to local economic development. This can be seen, for example, in the difference between the economic footprint of profitable national parks vs. smaller under-capacitated provincial nature reserves. If investments are made in management capacity in protected areas, their economic footprint and gains can expand.

WHY ARE PROTECTED AREAS IMPORTANT?

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5.3.2 Human Well-Being

Protected areas contribute to the human well-being of current and future generations, as they:

- ▶ Are part of our collective heritage as South Africans.
- ▶ Safeguard a healthier future.
- ▶ Are among the things that make us proud of being South African.
- ▶ Are our children's legacy.
- ▶ Safeguard our traditional and modern cultural heritage.

Protected areas are the only mechanism that provides long-term legal security for biodiversity and cultural landscapes for future generations. They are the most secure way to protect exceptional biodiversity and iconic species and landscapes. This knowledge translates into society feeling secure, knowing that what is precious to them will be protected into perpetuity. In a world characterised by continual rampant loss of biodiversity and cultural value, knowing this translates into a personal feeling of security. Moreover, this also translates into confidence in the state to be able to deliver on its constitutional obligations.

All humans have a spiritual connection to nature. Connecting with nature improves human-wellbeing. Every single South African should have a first-

hand experience of enjoying nature in a protected area in their lifetime. Ensuring equitable access to protected areas means making them affordable and physically accessible to people from all backgrounds. It promotes environmental awareness, fosters a sense of national pride, and encourages sustainable tourism. Additionally, access to these spaces supports the mental and physical well-being of individuals by offering places for relaxation and outdoor activities. A SANParks case study of Children in Parks showed access to protected areas had a positive impact on learners. The principal of Bushbuckridge school ascribes the 30% improvement in matric pass rate to learners participating in a Wilderness Leadership School programme located in a protected area.

5.3.3 Cultural Heritage

All of South Africa's cultural groups have cultures that are strongly linked to nature. Whether they are places in the landscape; species used for food, fuels, muthi or social status; or, simply being in nature, the connection between the individual, the community and sense of self and belonging is mediated by a

connection with nature. Protected areas play an important role in ensuring that this nature remains intact into the future.

Protected areas have become important vehicles for supporting cultural identity of many indigenous peoples and local community movements, who have either self-declared or worked with governments to develop protected areas to secure traditional lands, lifestyles and protect biodiversity¹.

5.3.4 Scientific Research and Education

Protected areas are ideal locations to conduct scientific research, as they represent benchmark sites where our environment functions with minimum interference from humans. Consequently, they are also excellent sites to establish long-term environmental monitoring sites. They represent what a "natural" world might have looked like historically. By comparing changes to the environment inside and outside protected areas it is possible to assess and quantify our impact on our living environment.



The protected area system provides current and future generations with a glimpse of what the world may have looked like in a time past. In an increasingly homogenised urban and cultivated world, protected areas provide society with the only living record of our natural legacy. They are living classrooms and laboratories full of learning opportunities. As an example, the NW has three protected areas which monitor leopard populations as part of a country wide initiative, and large protected areas are increasingly being viewed as important sentinels of healthy leopard populations.

5.4 POLITICAL BENEFITS

5.4.1 Land reform

Significant local economic development has been recorded where communities share in the benefits of major protected areas. Through the land reform process, local communities can become landowners with full access to the economic opportunities associated with the green economy in landscapes that otherwise generally offer few *viable* economic opportunities. Good examples exist in South Africa

of successful agreements with land claimants, which have had mutually beneficial outcomes (e.g. the Richtersveld National Park, the Makuleke section of Kruger National Park and iSimangaliso Wetland Park).

The relationship between protected areas and land reform has tended to be a controversial issue, with the focus usually on land claims in existing protected areas. Less attention has been paid to the opportunities for protected area expansion to actively support the land reform agenda and the diversification of rural livelihood options, especially in agriculturally marginal areas. Scope exists for



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protected area expansion to work in partnership with land reform for mutual benefit, for example through contract agreements, which establish nature reserves or other forms of biodiversity stewardship agreement on land that remains in the hands of its community owners, rather than being transferred to a protected area agency. The opportunity exists for local communities, as potentially major landholders through the land reform process, to have greater direct access to the economic opportunities associated with ecotourism and the wildlife economy.

Development of protected areas in land reform areas can have significant positive environmental and rural livelihoods outcomes. Successfully capitalising on the synergies between protected area development, land reform and rural development ultimately has positive political returns for the political heads seen to drive these processes where jobs equals votes.

5.4.2 Regional Co-operation and Investment

Trans-frontier conservation areas (TFCAs) provide unique opportunities to foster international relationships with neighbouring states, catalysing regional cooperation and investment. TFCAs are especially useful for fostering co-management and co-operation around the utilisation of shared natural resources, such as water or migratory wildlife. In the case of the North West, two TFCA opportunities

with Botswana are identified in relation to Madikwe Nature Reserve and the Molopo ecosystem (see Section 7.5).

5.5 ECONOMIC & FINANCIAL BENEFITS

5.5.1 Tourism Economy

Our biodiversity assets are one pillar of South Africa's tourism economy. The North West protected area system constitutes the "built infrastructure" for the provincial tourism economy. Tourism is the world's largest industry, and in South Africa it is one of the fastest growing sectors of the economy with some impressive statistics:

- ▶ In 2011, tourism contributed the same to the South African economy as mining, an estimated 9% to SA's GDP in 2011.
- ▶ Tourism currently provides the same number of direct and indirect jobs as the mining sector.
- ▶ It has been identified in government's economic strategies as one of the sectors that has the potential to create significant employment.
- ▶ Visitors to SA rate natural areas as the number one attraction.
- ▶ SANParks has the most beds of any tourist enterprise in South Africa.

The bottom line is that tourism is a big deal for rural economic development with the potential to provide economic growth, the foreign exchange and jobs needed to address the country's social prerogative.

It has been shown that in many rural regions, ecotourism (based on protected areas) provides a more viable option for economic development than agriculture, and the spin-off effects of tourism have a substantial impact on rural livelihoods. An interesting finding indicates that property on the periphery of protected areas enjoys substantial comparative returns. (The most valuable rural land in the country outside of peri-urban development nodes, based on 2005-2007 land prices, is found on the boundaries of the Kruger National Park). There is thus no reason why land adjacent Madikwe for instance can be as valuable.

The 2008 SANParks Economic Impact Assessment study² set out to determine the economic impact that the 21 South African National Parks have on the South African economy and found that the parks are making a significant contribution to local economic development. National parks provide an estimated

2. Munro, J., Moore, S. and Freitag-Ronaldson, S. 2010. *The impacts of tourism on two communities adjacent to the Kruger National Park, South Africa. Development Southern Africa*. 27. 663-678. 10.1080/0376835X.2010.522829



6,165 direct jobs and contribute R706m directly to the country's GDP. In addition, substantial spin-off effects include an additional 3,644 jobs that could be attributed to indirect impacts, and new business sales estimated at approximately R1.2bn. It was found that well managed national parks contribute to the economic profile of the communities within or around which they are situated by improving business, stimulating rural development, creating additional job opportunities and improving the value of properties on the periphery.

It is also worth noting that the Annual Tourism Report (2005) comments that the Total Foreign Direct Spend in South Africa was R55.9 billion (R28 billion more than gold exports), thus placing tourism in a prime position as one of the key economic drivers. The number of new jobs created in the economy by the tourism sector alone (direct and indirect) grew 3.5% from 1,024,520 in 2004 to 1,059,880 in 2005.

Rand for Rand Investment in Travel and Tourism Outperforms Mining in terms of Jobs Creation and Foreign Direct Investment

An excellent example of how the availability of public knowledge on a particular subject affects government investment into a sector is the Mining Sector. Public sentiment and public spending currently reflect a strong bias towards thinking that Mining is South Africa's key economic sector due to the contribution of the mining sector to job creation and foreign direct investment. As a result, the mining sector has received a disproportionate amount of investment from government. The government's current infrastructure spend is aimed primarily at evacuating mineral resources from this country. None of this infrastructure spend is aimed at developing the Green Economy. As a result, the total value of the mining sector on the Johannesburg Securities Exchange (JSE) is currently R1.9 Trillion or roughly 25% of the entire market capitalisation. However, if you compare the contribution of mining to job creation and foreign direct investment with an industry that

capitalises on South Africa's green infrastructure, such as tourism the results are remarkable:

Rand for rand the tourism industry in South Africa is 40 times more efficient at creating jobs and 10 times more efficient at earning FOREX than the mining sector. Tourism is currently the world's largest economic sector – worth more than \$500 billion per annum. Since 1960 the mining sector in South Africa has consistently shrunk in terms of proportion of the total workforce employed. In fact, the sector has only added 70 000 new jobs in the last decade. Compare this to the wildlife ranching and tourism industries that are currently growing at 4-5% per annum, and mining loses its appeal as a vehicle for addressing this countries unemployment woes. However, public and political sentiment remain largely in favour of mining as opposed to travel and tourism? Why? Because people are unaware of the facts and continue to be guided by popular sentiment and political lobbies in favour of mining.

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A study of the Addo Elephant National Park shows that the park produces a significant revenue stream that has considerable spin off effects in the surrounding areas, and that local economic development has benefited largely because of the park. Tourist businesses have provided skills training and education that in turn has improved literacy levels, providing increased access to other employment opportunities. In general, it appears that employees of the park and of related businesses pay their employees a much higher wage than that of the agricultural sector. In addition, the number of employed people has significantly improved, estimated to be a 100% increase over the last 5 years. Spin-off businesses have also markedly increased, and it is estimated in the study that of the 170 businesses in the area, 150 owe their existence to the park. Survey data indicates that the area is generally much more prosperous since the inception of the park. This would be true of the large and well-visited protected areas in North West too.

Unfortunately, GDP contribution does not factor in social and environmental externalities of industries such as labour unrest, occupational diseases, pollution, etc. In the NW, if the social, environmental and opportunity costs of mining were to be fully considered, especially the deferred cost to the state for dealing with these legacies, the tourism industry

would far exceed mining in terms of return on investment measured against any environmental, social and economic indicator.

5.5.2 Wildlife Economy

Protected areas stimulate the wildlife economy in the form of game farming. This is a rapidly growing and highly profitable agricultural sector in South Africa. It is more labour intensive than conventional stock farming. It is estimated that wildlife farming employs on average 3-4 times more people per unit area than conventional stock farming³. The most important benefit protected areas provide for the wildlife economy, is that they play a key role in maintaining the genetic resource pool on which game ranching depends.

Biodiversity assets underpin economic growth – an example from the Wildlife Industry

In 2012, about 18 200 head of game were traded at 58 game auctions in South Africa generating sales to the value of R960 million. Why are so

many animals traded? Ask any livestock farmer or agricultural expert and they will tell you that

good genes are central to a viable and healthy livestock enterprise. The quality of trophy and venison production is primarily determined by the quality of genes available in a species gene-pool. The responsibility of maintaining an evolutionary viable gene-pool for each economically important species of indigenous wildlife ultimately rests within protected areas and the state. The area required to maintain these genetic resources are provided by the provinces through the protected area systems. There are 10 000 registered private game ranchers in South Africa. They manage more than 20 million hectares of land, generate 100 000 permanent jobs and contribute an annual R9 billion to South Africa's GDP. The provincial government needs to give greater recognition to and support for maintaining a natural asset that is the cornerstone of what is one of North West's most valuable agricultural resources.

3. http://www.sawma.co.za/images/Dry_Gert_Full_paper.pdf



5.5.3 Job Creation

Protected areas create jobs directly through management, tourism enterprises within protected areas, and support services outside of protected areas in local towns that are service centres for protected areas. They stimulate and support local small businesses that supply hospitality or infrastructure services. These SMME's, because of their small-scale constraints on availability of financing and skills/technology development, are generally excluded from the industrial and mining economies.

All larger protected areas in South Africa tend to be surrounded by other private or community protected areas that also support rural jobs and local service industries. Therefore, they play a catalytic role in stimulating a tourism and wildlife economy in rural, and agriculturally and economically marginal areas that ultimately translates into jobs.

Government expenditure on ecological infrastructure in and around protected areas through Expanded Public Works programme also translates into additional jobs (e.g. see SANParks study 2008).

The quality of jobs in the sector is better than other economic sectors. The protected area /tourism/ wildlife sector is not characterised by labour unrest or with high incidence of occupational hazards (e.g.

tuberculosis and silicosis) that significantly reduce the life expectancy and quality of life/human well-being of industrial and mine workers. It could be argued that workers in protected areas and related industries are "happier" than workers in other industries. There is a definite high degree of quality of life for persons residing in protected areas.

The Price of Land is Related to its Economic Potential.

In South Africa the price of rural land is primarily determined by the economic potential of that land. Rural land near the major urban centres that has the potential to be re-zoned for urban development tends to be more expensive reflecting real-estate values rather than agricultural potential values. High value agricultural land such as alluvial soils with good irrigation potential can also command very high prices, however, high agricultural potential land is very rare in South Africa. For 90% of the rural landscape livestock farming is the primary agricultural activity, therefore, land prices directly reflect the stocking rate or density at which livestock can be farmed on the veld.

Mining potential has a high impact on land price at the site-scale but has no influence over land-prices at the regional scale. The only other rural economic activity that influences land prices at the regional scale is the potential for land to support wildlife ranching and, more importantly, the potential to support nature-based tourism (i.e. game lodges). The most expensive rural land in South Africa with values in excess of R50 000/ha are located adjacent to the Kruger National Park and these prices are being driven by the wildlife economy. These values reflect the economic potential of the land up to 100 times greater than similar veld types currently utilised only for livestock farming. A wildlife-based Green Economy in North West province with the protected area system as the central driver of this change has the potential to transform the economy of the province and deliver the rural job growth necessary to sustain rural livelihoods.

Rural land prices (2005-2007 median sale price R/ha per vegetation type) across South African. (Desmet and Cloete, 2014)

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2025-2030 STRATEGIC GOALS FOR PROTECTED AREA EXPANSION

2025-2030 STRATEGIC GOALS FOR PROTECTED AREA EXPANSION



6.1 VISION

Protected area expansion in the NW Province should be undertaken to:

Expand the protected area system in The NW in a strategic, targeted fashion to ensure the persistence of key biodiversity features and ecological processes, while fostering inclusive community participation, promoting sustainable livelihoods, and enhancing environmental stewardship for the benefit of present and future generations.



6.2 OBJECTIVES

Protected area expansion must contribute to the achievement of the biodiversity targets of the North West Biodiversity Sector Plan, in particular the protection of Critical Biodiversity Areas (CBAs) and, to a lesser extent, Ecological Support Areas (ESAs). The protection of these areas should be supplemented through the establishment of OECMs, which contribute towards South Africa's targets linked to the GBF and will enable landscape level efforts to ensure the persistence of species and the maintenance of the province's ecological integrity and resilience, which has multi-faceted benefits for society.

The objectives for protected area expansion in The NW will be to:

- ▶ Secure priority areas of natural or near-natural habitat for representation and persistence of biodiversity.

- ▶ Enable ecological connectivity at landscape levels that facilitate the movement and dispersal of key species within the province and beyond.
- ▶ Enable the maintenance of landscape-level ecological processes and functions, essential for the provision of ecological services that support society and human well-being, including securing key ecological infrastructure such as strategic water source areas.
- ▶ Facilitate climate change mitigation and adaptation through the protection of ecological infrastructure that reduces the threats and impacts of extreme events associated with climate change, leading to enhanced environmental and socio-economic resilience.
- ▶ To enable and facilitate sustainable rural economic development, job creation and improved food security in support of sustainable land use and South Africa's biodiversity economy.

2025-2030 STRATEGIC GOALS FOR PROTECTED AREA EXPANSION



6.3 STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

The following strategic outcomes are anticipated as the NW PAES 2025-2030 is implemented.

► **Existing protected areas in the NW comply with the provisions of NEMPAA.**

The status of existing protected areas within The NW must be evaluated, particularly the status of private nature reserves, as required by the Norms and Standards for the Inclusion of Private Nature Reserves in the Register of Protected Areas of South Africa. These areas must be verified and validated to determine if they continue to have biodiversity that warrants

them being deemed to be protected areas and to ensure that they are effectively managed in terms of the provisions of NEMPAA. These processes will inform the achievement of existing protected area targets and the need for further protected area expansion in the relevant vegetation types in which they are located.

► **Protected area targets consistent with the ambitions enunciated in relevant national policies but realistic to the NW's context are adopted.**

Protected area targets must be set for each vegetation type in North West Province to enable the establishment of a representative

system of protected areas. These targets must be aligned with the ambition of key national policy documents, such as the White Paper on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of South Africa's Biodiversity, the National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plan and the obligations that South Africa has, linked to the GBF as a signatory of the CBD.

► **Protected area expansion efforts are focussed on priority areas, aligned with the NW's Biodiversity Sector Plan 2025-2030 and other key informants.**

The focus for protected area expansion in The NW must be on the spatial priorities identified in the Biodiversity Sector Plan 2025, which have been integrated into the spatial priorities in this NWPAES 2025-2030. Other tools such as land cover, threatened ecosystems, species inventories and other informants may be used to supplement the identification of priority areas for protected area expansion.

► **Landscape-level conservation initiatives, aligned with the Provincial and National Biodiversity Economy Strategy, are identified and implemented in the NW.**

Opportunities to establish and build on landscape level conservation initiatives, which seek to enable connectivity between protected areas and provide a vehicle for rural economic



growth and development, must be explored and implemented. Such initiatives should be based on securing critical biodiversity, ecological integrity and resilience across landscapes linked to opportunities associated with sustainable rangeland management, the wildlife economy and the restoration economy.

- ▶ **Protected area expansion mechanisms, appropriate to the NW are developed and implemented in consolidating and expanding the protected area system.**
A full suite of tools to undertake protected area expansion in the NW should be utilised. These should include the adoption of biodiversity stewardship, the use of biodiversity offsets, the strategic acquisition of land and the transfer of existing state-owned land that warrants biodiversity protection.
- ▶ **An enabling environment for protected area expansion is provided in the NW.**
An understanding of the processes required to undertake protected area declarations must be adopted by the NWPTB and DEDECT. These processes must enable the rigorous and consistent assessment of candidate sites and a consistent approach to the declaration of protected areas that is aligned with the provisions of NEMPAA. Certainty in the approach and consistency in its application will

enable partners, such as NGOs, to support these processes and will encourage landowners and land rights holders to undertake the process to have their land declared as protected areas.

- ▶ **An approach that is consistent with protected area expansion efforts in other provinces is adopted within the NW.**
The expansion of protected areas, including the selection, evaluation, and designation of candidate sites, should align with similar initiatives in other provinces. The NW should utilise the tools and methodologies being developed by forums such as the National Stewardship Technical Working Group and others to support this process.
- ▶ **Monitoring, oversight and reporting is instituted to enable the effective implementation of the NW PAES.**
Monitoring and reporting mechanisms, measured against national and provincial protected area expansion targets, should be developed. The achievement of biodiversity objectives and protected area targets should be evaluated and periodically reported on.





**2025-2030
PROTECTED AREA TARGETS
AND SPATIAL PRIORITIES**

2025-2030 PROTECTED AREA TARGETS AND SPATIAL PRIORITIES



7.

7.1 DETERMINING THE LAND AREA TARGET FOR PROTECTED AREAS

The NPAES defines protected area targets as “action targets that indicate how much of each ecosystem should be included in protected areas. They help to focus protected area expansion on the least protected ecosystems and provide the basis for assessments.”

In the case of the NPAES, which was updated in 2018, it used the established biodiversity targets for each ecosystem from the National Biodiversity Assessment (NBA) as the long-term protected area targets. This was intended to ensure that targets were scientifically robust and had an ecological basis, while also ensuring that no further ecosystems became Critically Endangered, and that the NBA and the NPAES were aligned. The 20-year targets of the NPAES were designed to achieve overall CBD Aichi biodiversity targets, which called for the conservation of at least 17% of terrestrial and inland waters, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services.

The Aichi targets have subsequently been replaced by the 30x30 targets set in the GBF. In this instance Target 3, which calls on parties to the CBD to protect 30% of the planet’s surface area, is of most relevance.

The target of protecting 30% of the planet’s land and ocean is considered crucial for preserving habitats and species that are currently under threat and for protecting biodiversity that is essential for ecosystem health, resilience, and the provision of ecosystem services that humans rely on, such as nutrient cycling, soil formation, clean water, pollination, and climate regulation. The target of 30% has been adopted by the CBD through the GBF, as it is considered necessary to avoid species extinctions and the protection of critical habitats that are necessary for species survival. Ecosystems rely on complex interactions amongst species and their environment and protecting larger areas helps maintain these interactions, ensuring ecosystems can continue to provide essential functions that society relies on.

The development of protected area targets for the NW has been undertaken within the context of the targets set through the GBF and within the context of South Africa’s biodiversity policy environment.



2025-2030 PROTECTED AREA TARGETS AND SPATIAL PRIORITIES

7.

7.2 PROTECTED AREA EXPANSION TARGETS FOR NORTH WEST PROVINCE

The protected area expansion targets for The NW must be aligned with the targets set in the NPAES for South Africa. The key targets informing the NW PAES are those for national vegetation types or ecosystems. These are defined at the national level for each vegetation type and applied on a proportional basis in the province (Table 6). Ecosystems targets are expressed as a proportion of the original extent of each ecosystem.

It is important to note that South Africa is required to update its National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) in response to the adoption of the 30x30 GBF. This is likely to require an update of the NPAES with revised targets that are aligned with Target 3 of the GBF that set a 30% target for protected areas. For this PAES the ecosystem targets set in the NPAES form the basis for protected area expansion targets in the NW.

The ability to achieve these conservation targets is primarily a function of the amount of each ecosystem remaining in a natural condition relative to the target.

In Table 1 the Threat Status of ecosystems gives an indication of the ability to achieve targets. In highly modified ecosystems (i.e. EN and VU) the options for achieving targets are very limited with approximately 50% (VU) to 100% (EN) of the remaining vegetation type extent being required to meet protection targets. In CE ecosystems the amount remaining is less than the conservation target and therefore 100% of the remaining extent requires protection plus restoration of modified areas to reach the protection target.

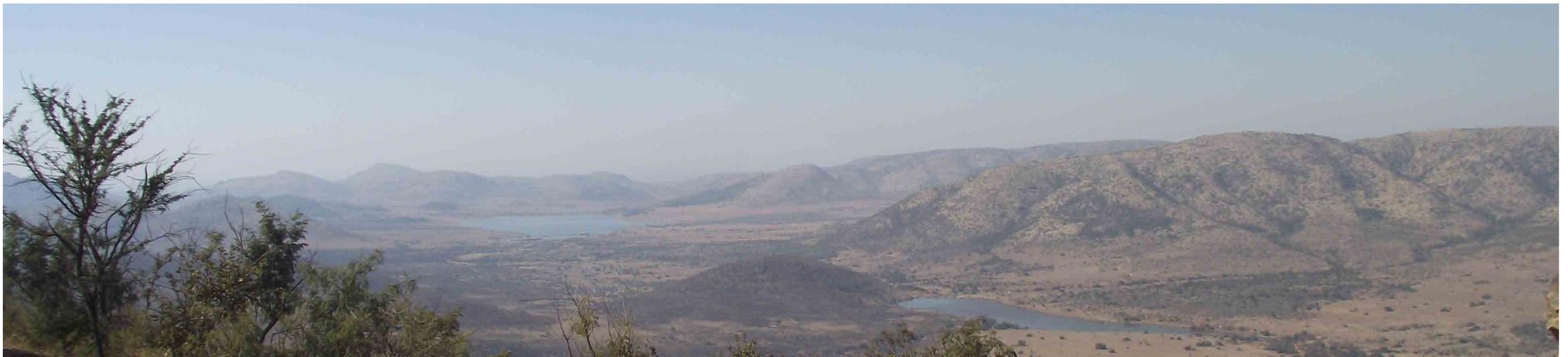




Table 6. The original extent of vegetation types in the NW with the percentage remaining in a natural condition (as per land cover map); the biodiversity conservation target for each vegetation type; and the 2025 NW ecosystem threat status.

VEGETATION TYPE NAME	ORIGINAL EXTENT (HA)	ENDEMICITY	% REMAINING	THREATENED 2024	THREATENED 2015	CHANGE 2015-2025	CONSERVATION TARGET (%)	LEVEL OF PROTECTION
Springbokvlakte Thornveld	22,491	3.4	20.3	CR	EN	UP	19	Not protected
Vaal-Vet Sandy Grassland	1,033,728	43.2	16.8	CR	CR	No change	24	Poorly protected
Marikana Thornveld	127,055	57.1	25.8	EN	VU	UP	19	Not protected
Rand Highveld Grassland	265,022	29	30.9	EN	EN	No change	24	Not protected
Vredefort Dome Granite Grassland	4,450	6	36.3	EN	CR	DOWN	24	Not protected
Western Highveld Sandy Grassland	734,949	100	29.6	EN	CR	DOWN	24	Poorly protected
Klerksdorp Thornveld	343,903	100	50.7	VU	VU	No change	24	Poorly protected
Moot Plains Bushveld	139,695	77.7	40.5	VU	VU	No change	19	Poorly protected
Schweizer-Reneke Bushveld	133,543	100	38.4	VU	VU	No change	16	Poorly protected
Vaal Reefs Dolomite Sinkhole Woodland	26,543	85.2	60.1	VU	VU	No change	24	Not protected
Vryburg Thornveld	646,260	96.7	45.3	VU		New	16	Not protected
Zeerust Thornveld	131,324	99.7	61.3	VU	VU	No change	19	Poorly protected
Andesite Mountain Bushveld	179,525	55.7	80.6				24	Poorly protected
Carletonville Dolomite Grassland	570,807	67.8	73.9				24	Poorly protected
Central Sandy Bushveld	265,078	16	76.8				19	Moderately protected
Central Sandy Mountain Bushveld	29,248	76.8	96.4				19	Well protected
Dwaalboom Thornveld	259,363	39.8	71.1		VU	DOWN	19	Moderately protected
Dwarsberg-Swartruggens Mountain Bushveld	409,060	98.6	85.7				24	Poorly protected
Gauteng Shale Mountain Bushveld	64,632	45.1	64.3				24	Poorly protected
Ghaap Plateau Vaalbosveld	422,244	31.9	95.1				16	Not protected
Gold Reef Mountain Bushveld	229,925	74.5	85				24	Moderately protected
Highveld Alluvial Vegetation	426,331	10	65.1		EN	DOWN	31	Poorly protected
Kimberley Thornveld	190,396	11.4	84.6		VU	DOWN	16	Poorly protected
Kuruman Mountain Bushveld	123,199	21.2	83.3				16	Not protected
Kuruman Vaalbosveld	45,690	13.5	95.4				16	Not protected
Madikwe Dolomite Bushveld	83,567	76.3	96.1				19	Well protected
Mafikeng Bushveld	1,353,193	90.8	73.8		VU	DOWN	16	Not protected
Molopo Bushveld	784,370	57.6	96.8				16	Moderately protected
Morokweng Thornveld	100,159	100	93.9				16	Not protected
Norite Koppies Bushveld	41,913	85.4	72				24	Not protected
Northern Afrotropical Forest	2,333	10.9	96.6				22	Well protected
Pilanesberg Mountain Bushveld	36,687	100	97.2				24	Well protected
Schmidtsdrif Thornveld	66,077	13.4	69.7		VU	DOWN	16	Not protected
Southern Kalahari Mekkacha	126,029	0	69.7		VU	DOWN	24	Poorly protected
Stella Bushveld	402,108	100	73.8				16	Poorly protected
Subtropical Alluvial Vegetation	69,526	10	63.3				31	Poorly protected
Waterberg Mountain Bushveld	524	0.1	64.7				24	Not protected
Waterberg-Magaliesberg Summit Sourveld	2,159	4.2	98.7				24	Well protected
Western Sandy Bushveld	579,918	51.5	70.6		VU	DOWN	19	Moderately protected

Rows highlighted in yellow = vulnerable, orange = endangered & red = critically endangered threat status

Notes: 1: New vegetation types hence not included in the 2015 assessment. 2: Note that the significant changes in ecosystem status since 2015 mostly reflects changes in the mapped extent of ecosystems reflected in the updated vegetation map developed for the province over this period. 3:Threat status calculation based on land cover data that is accurate to 2024."

2025-2030 PROTECTED AREA TARGETS AND SPATIAL PRIORITIES

7.3 PROTECTED AREA EXPANSION SPATIAL PRIORITY INFORMANTS

There are a number of datasets informing the identification of spatial priorities for PAN development in the NW. Spatial informants of the PAES fall into two groups - those that identify specific sites or geographic areas for action, and those of a more general spatial nature that give expression to an overarching or long-term spatial vision for the PAN:

1. Site or area specific informants:

- ▶ Areas necessary to achieve conservation targets for biodiversity pattern and ecological processes as identified through the systematic conservation assessment used to inform the provincial CBA map.
- ▶ Areas identified based on context specific opportunities or risks:
 - Implementation opportunity such as areas with low conflict with competing land uses or high landowner willingness so are low hanging fruit for protected area development; or,
 - Biodiversity risk such as areas at high risk of being lost if no conservation action is taken.

- ▶ Expert inputs identifying areas important for including in the PAN.
2. **PAN Vision: A spatial blueprint for the long term development of the PAN aimed at achieving biodiversity conservation, ecological sustainability, climate change adaptation and economic development goals. Specific informants include:**
- ▶ Mega living landscapes
 - ▶ Biodiversity economy nodes
 - ▶ The NW spatial biodiversity framework

7.3.1 NW Provincial Protected Area Expansion Strategy (2011-2034)

The spatial priorities set in this PAES are primarily informed by those set in the 2011 strategy. The 2011 NW PAES identifies 14 spatial focus areas divided into four implementation priority levels (Figure 7, Table 7):

1. Level A: Priority areas that were identified as such in both NWPAES and NPAES. These PAs are either in a process of acquiring PA status or are situated in critically endangered vegetation types and have to be conserved within the next five years.
2. Level B: Priority areas that are important in

NWPAES, are situated in vulnerable vegetation types and have to be conserved within the next five years

3. Level C: Priority areas that are important in NWPAES. These PAs have to be conserved within the next 5-15 years.
4. Level D: Priority areas that were important in NPAES 5-20 years plan.



Table 7. A summary of the spatial focus areas identified in the 2011 NW PAES. Numbers in the table correspond to number on the map in Figure 7

Priority A	
1.	Vaal-vet Sandy Grassland
2.	The Taung area and Ghaap Plateau Vaalbosveld.
3.	SA Lombard Nature Reserve and Western Highveld Sandy Grassland.
4.	The area south of the Molopo Nature Reserve and Molopo Bushveld.
5.	The Magaliesberg Protected Natural Environment.
6.	The Groot Marico area including Zeerust Thornveld and Dwarsberg Swartruggens Mountain Bushveld.
7.	The Barakologadi area incorporated into the Madikwe as part of the Platinum Heritage Park.
8.	The Lebatlane area incorporated into the Platinum Heritage Park.

Priority B	
1.	Priority threatened grassland vegetation types including Rand Highveld Grassland, Vaal-Vet Sandy Grassland, Waterberg-Magaliesberg Summit Sourveld and Vaal Reefs Sinkhole Woodlands. No specific sites identified.
2.	Priority potentially threatened bushveld vegetation types including Madikwe Dolomite Bushveld, Dwarsberg-Swartruggens Mountain Bushveld, Marikana Thornveld, Norite Koppies Bushveld, Springbokvlakte Thornveld, Stella Bushveld and Schweizer-Reneke Bushveld. No specific sites identified.
3.	The SANDF General de la Rey military training area (Potchefstroom)
4.	The Vredefort Dome World Heritage Site and Vredefort Dome Granite Grassland.

Priority C	
1.	The Malmane Karst landscape.
2.	The Setlagole – Bray area Molopo River and Mafikeng Bushveld.
3.	The Molopo Nature Reserve and the greater Molopo Bushveld/Kalahari ecosystem.

Priority D	
1.	The Dinopeng - Ditshipeng Griekwaland West Centre of endemism
2.	The area north of Christiana Kimberley Thornveld (same as priority A3)
3.	The Magaliesberg – Dwarsberg – Swartruggens corridor.
4.	The Platinum Heritage Park landscape ecological corridor.

2025-2030 PROTECTED AREA TARGETS AND SPATIAL PRIORITIES

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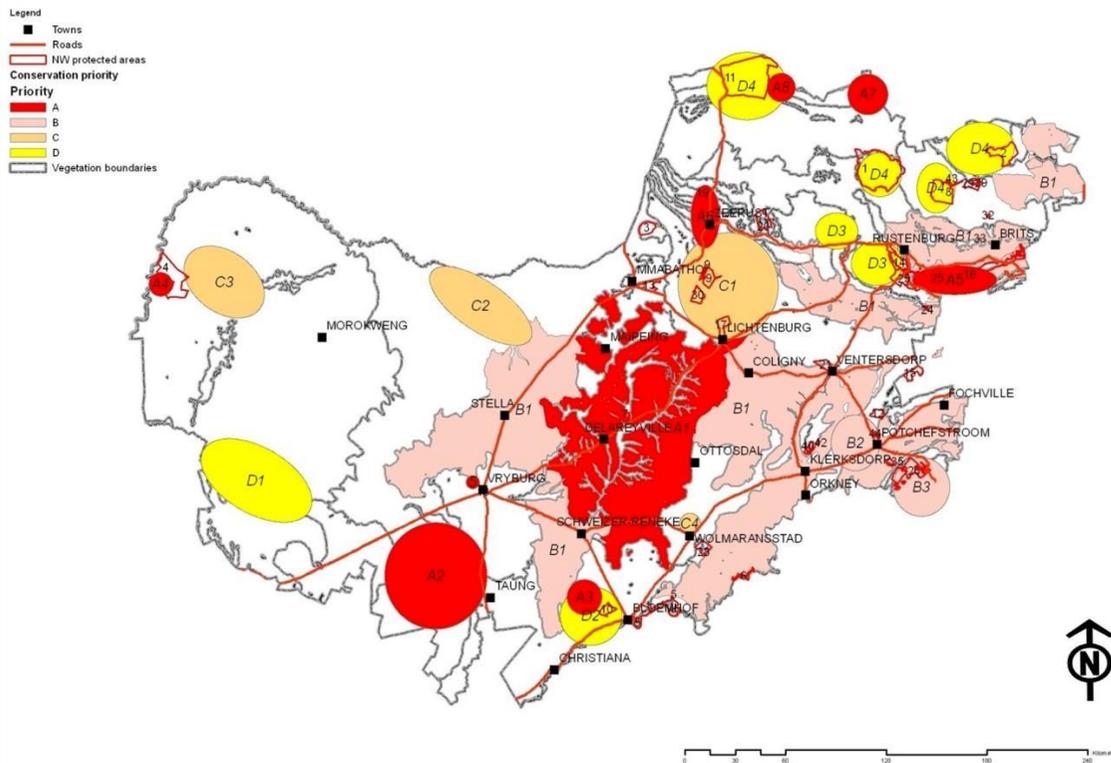


Figure 7. Spatial priorities for protected area expansion identified in the NW PAES (2011).

7.3.2 National Protected Area Expansion Strategy 2018

The NPAES identifies a set of priorities for protected area expansion in The NW. These priorities are broadly based on spatial priorities identified in the North West provincial biodiversity sector plan and PAES. The major spatial priorities areas include:

- ▶ The Platinum Heritage Park in the northeast of the province.
- ▶ The Highveld Park around Potchefstroom to Boskop Dam Nature Reserve
- ▶ The lower Vaal around SA Lombard and Bloemhof Dam NRs
- ▶ Taung
- ▶ Molemane to Marico
- ▶ The greater Molopo NR area

In addition, the NPAES prioritises some important finer scale corridors through the few remaining intact linkages in the centre of the province.

The main biodiversity features in the NW, identified in the NPAES are under-protected ecosystem types, particularly in the Central Bushveld, Arid Highveld Grasslands and Eastern Kalahari Bushveld ecosystems. The NPAES emphasises a strong focus on improving landscape connectivity between protected areas, with a particular focus on the major connections in the Bushveld areas of the Platinum Heritage Park and the more tenuous remaining river corridors through the Arid Highveld Grasslands.

It should be noted that the 2011 NW PAES informed the national PAES. Whilst the NPAES provides the national context for PA expansion and development, the spatial priorities are determined primarily through the provincial-level analysis. Therefore, the NPAES map in Figure 8 has been revised based on the outcomes of this assessment.

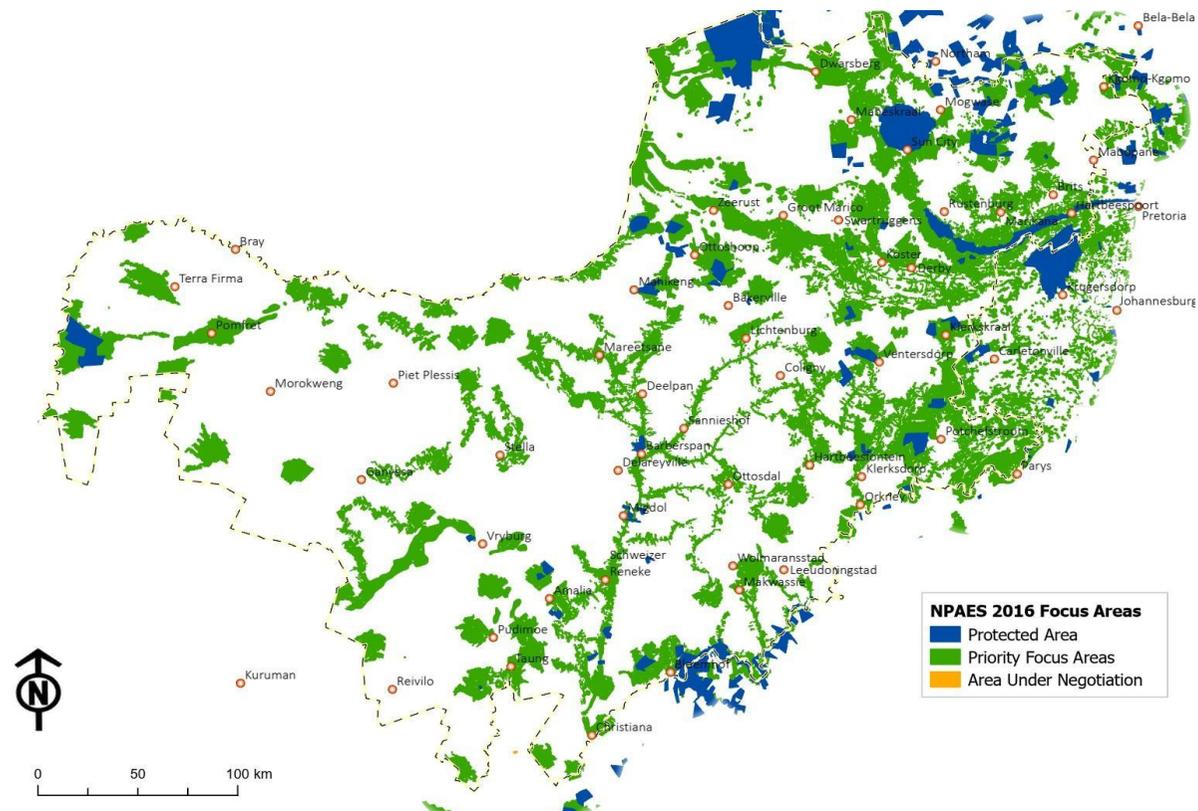


Figure 8. Spatial priorities for protected area expansion in the NW identified in the NPAES (2018).

THE WHOLE LANDSCAPE

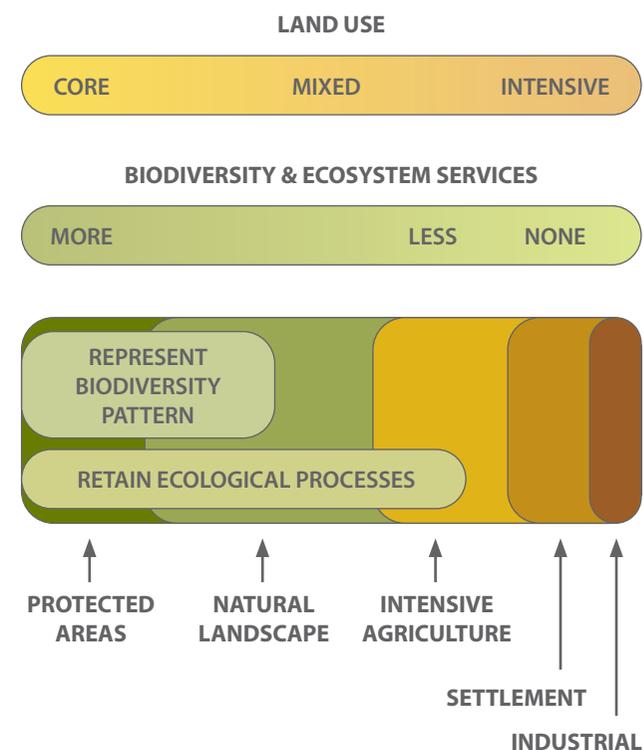
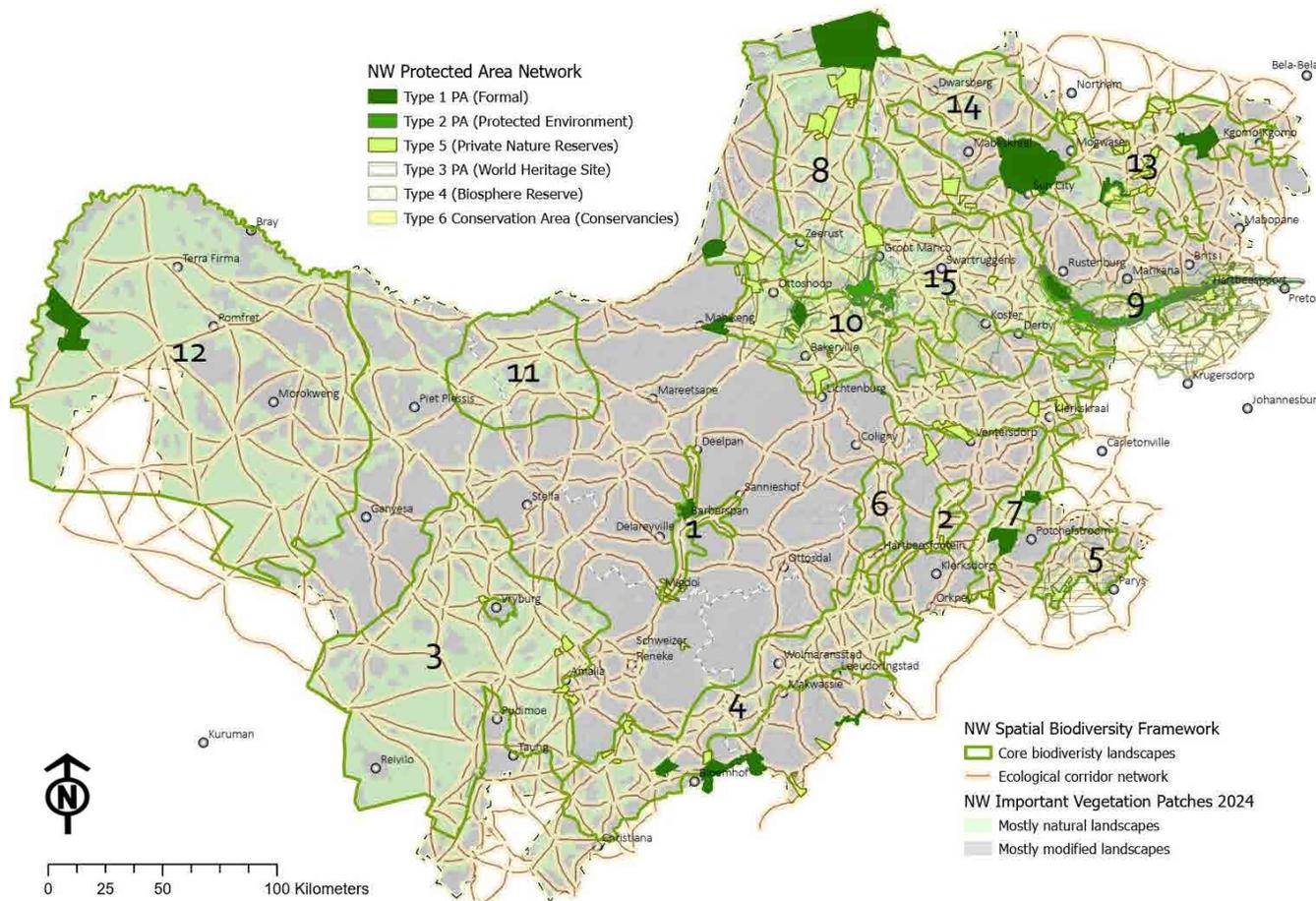


Figure 9. The living-landscape conceptual framework that informs the development of the NW biodiversity spatial framework and ultimately the provincial CBA map and PAES.

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7.3.3 NW spatial biodiversity framework

The NW Spatial Biodiversity Framework (NWSBF) is a spatial vision for a living landscape that achieves our biodiversity conservation goals whilst avoiding where possible competing land uses and development pressures. The biodiversity spatial framework gives expression to the Living Landscape concept articulated in Figure 10. The NW biodiversity spatial framework provides a generalised representation of the location of core biodiversity conservation landscapes connected via a network of ecological corridors aligned with the major climatic and environmental gradients in the province.

The NWSBF is a high-level spatial expression of the key biodiversity conservation and climate change adaptation goals embodied in the NW Biodiversity Sector Plan CBA Map. The NWSBF can be used to inform the provincial and national protected area expansion strategies as well as high-level spatial planning tools such as SDFs.

Ideally protected area expansion in the NW should be aligned with this landscape vision. This in turn enables the development of a conceptual living-landscape framework, with a system of protected areas that conserve biodiversity and ecosystem services, embedded within it (Figure 10).

Figure 10. The 2025 NW spatial biodiversity framework illustrates the high-level biodiversity spatial planning concepts informing the BSP CBA Map and the PAES. The SBF comprises protected areas, core biodiversity areas or landscapes where natural ecosystems predominate; and, the provincial ecological corridor network that connects the PAN and core biodiversity landscapes.



7.3.4 SANParks 2040 Mega-Living Landscape Vision

SANParks Vision 2040 (Figure 11), which was revealed on the 26th of September 2024, represents a paradigm shift for the organisation in which people are placed at the heart of conservation. It envisages the creation of large, landscape-level biodiversity conservation initiatives, called Mega Living Landscapes, that encompass areas of high levels of protection, using the array of tools provided by NEMPAA, the establishment of OECMs and the encouragement of other compatible land uses. The intention of this is to create large ecologically connected areas that enable ecological functions to be re-established and maintained across landscapes, whilst providing a platform for economic development, linked to tourism, the wildlife economy, sustainable agriculture and the restoration economy. This is a radical departure from a historic conservation approach that has largely been focussed on keeping people out and separate from national parks. This historically inward-looking approach to biodiversity conservation requires a cultural shift within the organisation that is far more outward-looking, focussed on providing benefits to both people and nature. This is consistent with the White Paper and the National Biodiversity Economy Strategy and is also aligned with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) and its targets, such as Target 3.

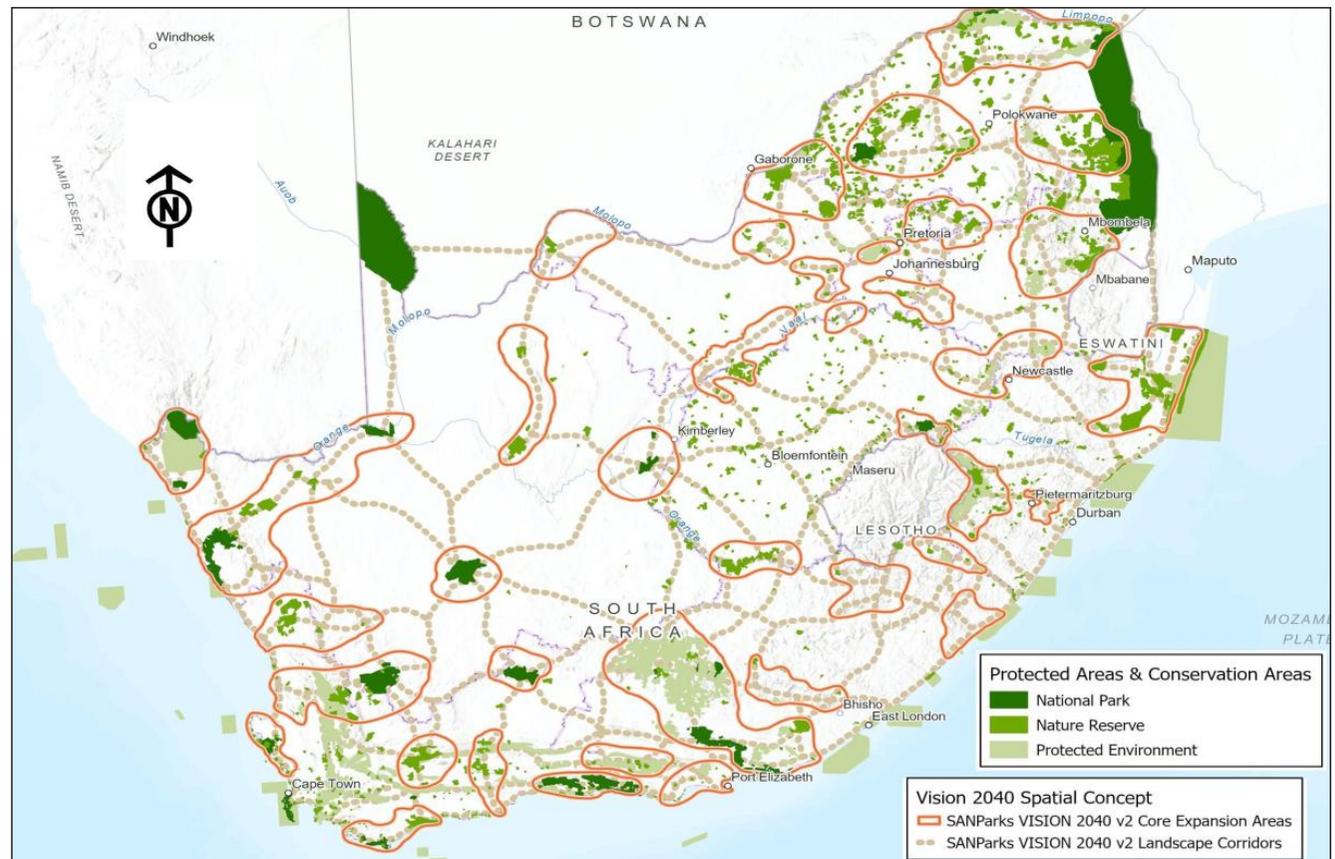


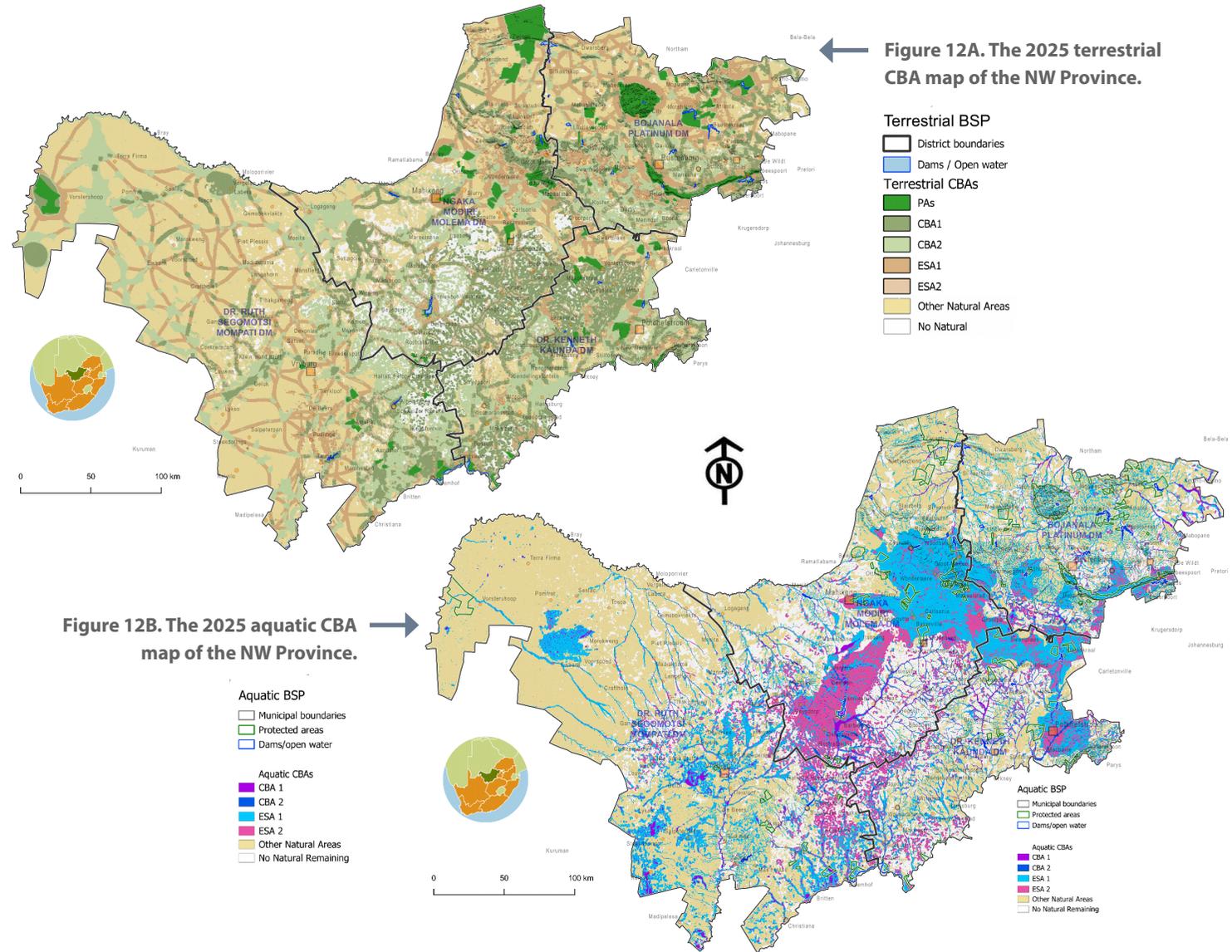
Figure 11. The Vision 2040 spatial concept for the development of the protected areas network and biodiversity economy landscapes in South Africa.

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7.3.5 Biodiversity Economy Nodes

The development of South Africa's Biodiversity Economy, as informed by the White Paper and the draft National Biodiversity Economy Strategy is intended to unlock sustainable economic opportunities linked to the country's biodiversity whilst enabling socio-economic transformation, especially in historically poor rural areas. The National Biodiversity Economy Strategy has been developed "to optimise biodiversity-based business potential across the terrestrial and freshwater, realms, inter alia, and to contribute to economic growth with local beneficiation, job creation, poverty alleviation, and food security, whilst maintaining the ecological integrity of the biodiversity resource base, for thriving people and nature." It must be noted that the terminology linked to South Africa's biodiversity economy is evolving. The National Biodiversity Economy Strategy no longer refers to biodiversity economy nodes but instead uses the term 'mega living conservation landscapes'. This is consistent with SANParks Vision 2040, which has adopted the concept of Mega Living Landscapes.





7.3.6 NW BSP 2025

The BSP 2025 terrestrial and aquatic CBA maps and associated systematic conservation planning analysis provide the most up to date provincial-level spatial analysis of biodiversity conservation priorities (figure 12). The provincial CBA map is a useful informant around which to develop priorities for the NW PAES. It must be noted, however, the CBA maps do not explicitly take into account biodiversity, ecosystem, cultural or economic considerations that are important when developing a PAES. These include area requirements for large mammals, cultural heritage, landscape sense-of-place and natural viewsheds, PA area and perimeter management effectiveness measures, and biodiversity economy economies of scale.

In addition to the CBA map, the MARXAN analysis conducted as part of the systematic assessment informing the CBA maps can identify areas of the province important for conserving biodiversity based on the biodiversity features present (e.g. vegetation types); the conservation target set for these features (Section 7.2); how much of each feature is remaining (Table 6); and, how much of the conservation target is already achieved in the existing PAN.

It must be noted that the MARXAN analysis does not consider other features that are useful PAN

informants such as, the area requirements for *viable* populations of large mammals (e.g. elephant or lion populations) or non-biodiversity features such as cultural values or landscape sense of place (e.g. natural viewsheds).

7.3.7 Expert inputs

At the NW PAES stakeholder workshop held on 5-6 March 2025, participants were asked to indicate on a map areas that they thought were important to include in the NW PAN. The stakeholders at the workshop all had a background in biodiversity/protected area management in the province or nationally. In total, 53 areas were mapped by the experts (Figure 13). The criteria given to experts to consider when identifying areas included:

- ▶ Specific sites important for biodiversity (e.g. locality of a species of conservation concern or good example of an ecosystem/vegetation type) or ecological processes (e.g. ecological linkages between core areas).
- ▶ Sites of outstanding natural beauty, visually sensitive areas (i.e. viewsheds) or high cultural value.
- ▶ Sites or areas important for consolidating PAs to improve management effectiveness
- ▶ Areas that will add to the economic value of the PAN (e.g. development of biodiversity economy nodes, community participation in

the biodiversity economy).

- ▶ Areas identified could include terrestrial or aquatic important areas.

Collectively, these areas indicate spatial priorities for PA development in the province. These areas all align spatially with the informants discussed above. The 53 areas can be geographically grouped into eight areas:

- a. Ghaap Plateau
- b. Kweneng – Golden Highway Highveld Grassland Corridor
- c. Greater Molopo-Kgalagadi Ecosystem
- d. Harts River Vaal-Vet Sandy Grassland
- e. Magaliesberg Ecosystem
- f. Malmani Karst Landscape / strategic water source area.
- g. Molopo - Mositha Natural Area
- h. Platinum Heritage Park

These expert mapped areas are summarised into 29 PAES focal areas (Figure 15, Table 10) for implementation action. The prioritisation of these areas for implementation action is discussed in Section 7.5.



Table 8. Summary of the priority areas identified by experts

Id	Area Name	Description	Focus
A	Ghaap Plateau		
11	Ghaap Plateau pan veld	Very high conservation value wetland/river ecosystem	Aquatic
12	Ghaap Plateau Taung	Thomeng Tufa waterfall / risk of being lost to settlement, palaeontological importance of Taung skull site	Terrestrial and Aquatic
45	Taung Dam	Scenic landscape	Terrestrial
46	Droe Harts River	Very high conservation value wetland/river ecosystem	Terrestrial and Aquatic
B	Kweneng – Golden Highway Highveld Grassland Corridor		
10	Faan Meintjies expansion	Landscape ecological corridor core node, grassland habitat	Terrestrial
13	Highveld National Park	Important large extent of intact grassland and landscape ecological corridor core node.	Terrestrial
14	Africa Parks Rhino Rewilding Project, Klerksdorp	African Parks rhino properties/Klerksdorp thornveld core area and notably Vaal-Vet Sandy Grasslands	Terrestrial
17	Klerksdorp grassland	Intact grassland and landscape ecological corridor core node	Terrestrial
41	SA Lombard expansion	Landscape ecological corridor core node, Western Highveld Sandy Grassland and wetland/pan/alluvial ecosystems	Terrestrial and Aquatic
51	Wolmaransstad grassland	Landscape ecological corridor core node, intact grassland	Terrestrial
52	Wolwespruit expansion	Expand to improve management effectiveness	Terrestrial
53	Vredefort Dome	Vredefort dome grassland stewardship sites	Terrestrial
C	Greater Molopo-Kgalagadi Ecosystem		
28	Molopo Ecosystem Priority Area	Long term goal to create an ecosystem level flagship national park, including private reserves of !Khamab and Lalibela Kalahari, should they be interested.	Terrestrial
29	Molopo medium term expansion	Medium term expansion goal for Molopo NR	Terrestrial
30	Molopo short term expansion	Immediate expansion priorities for Molopo NR	Terrestrial
30	Molopo short term expansion	Immediate expansion priorities for Molopo NR	Terrestrial
30	Molopo short term expansion	Immediate expansion priorities for Molopo NR	Terrestrial
31	Molopo Transfrontier Conservation Area	Trans frontier park linking Molopo NR with Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park	Terrestrial

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Id	Area Name	Description	Focus
35	Morokweng pan veld	Strategic water source area	Aquatic
48	Tswalu-Molopo Expansion Area	Landscape ecological corridor connecting Molopo and Tswalu	Terrestrial
D	Harts River Vaal-Vet Sandy Grassland		
1	Barberspan expansion north	Northwards expansion to capture wetlands/pans and western highveld grassland	Terrestrial and Aquatic
2	Barberspan expansion south	Barberspan expansion south to include Harts River ecosystem and both Western Highveld Sandy and Vaal-Vet Sandy Grassland, very high conservation value wetland/river ecosystem	Terrestrial and Aquatic
E	Magaliesberg Ecosystem		
8	Cradle-Magaliesberg link	Landscape ecological corridor linking the WHS and Magaliesberg	Terrestrial
15	Kgaswane wetland	Very high conservation value wetland/river ecosystem	Aquatic
19	Koster link	Landscape ecological corridor linking Magaliesberg and Mariko biosphere reserves	Terrestrial
23	Magaliesberg expansion	Expansion of Magaliesberg BR	Terrestrial
36	Norite koppies	Very high conservation importance	Terrestrial
36	Norite koppies	Very high conservation importance	Terrestrial
37	Phokeng link	Landscape ecological corridor extending the Magaliesberg BR to connect with Pilanesberg Nature Reserve	Terrestrial
44	Skeerpoort River	Very high conservation value wetland/river ecosystem	Aquatic
F	Malmani Karst Landscape		
5	Botsalano-Mahikeng corridor	Expansion of Botsalano and Mahikeng ultimately linking 2 parks	Terrestrial
7	Bultfontein wetlands	Very high conservation value wetland/river ecosystem	Aquatic
24	Malmane and Molopo eye catchments	Very high conservation value wetland/river ecosystem	Aquatic
26	Marico River	Very high conservation value wetland/river ecosystem	Aquatic
32	Mooi River catchment	Mooi River catchment wetlands and river, strategic water source area	Aquatic
33	Mooi River grassland	Last remaining intact mesic Highveld grassland catchment very important expansion node, also some significant dolomitic caves	Terrestrial



Id	Area Name	Description	Focus
G	Molopo Mositha Natural Area		
27	Mositha Natural Area	Landscape ecological corridor core node. Large intact landscape for biodiversity economy	Terrestrial
H	Platinum Heritage Mega Living Landscape		
3	Borakalalo expansion north	Northwards expansion of Borakalalo to link with the Waterberg/Marekele NP	Terrestrial
4	Borakalalo expansion south	Borakalalo expansion to the south to include Springbokvlakte Thornveld	Terrestrial
6	Brakfonteinspruit	Very high conservation value wetland/river ecosystem	Aquatic
9	Crocodile River link	Landscape ecological corridor across the Crocodile River linking Vaalkop and Borakalalo	Terrestrial
16	Kgomo-Kgomo floodplains	Very high conservation value wetland/river ecosystem, particularly important for avitourism	Aquatic
18	Kolobeng River	Very high conservation value wetland/river ecosystem	Aquatic
20	Madikwe expansion east	Immediate focus for eastwards expansion of Madikwe Nature Reserve	Terrestrial
21	Madikwe expansion south	Landscape ecological corridor for large mammals linking Madikwe to Marico	Terrestrial
22	Madikwe TFCA	Trans frontier park for northward expansion of Madikwe	Terrestrial
25	Mankwe Wildlife Reserve	Platinum Heritage Park corridor link, eastern side, well managed reserve	Terrestrial
38	Pilanesberg expansion east	Critical corridor allowing eastwards expansion of Pilanesberg Nature Reserve	Terrestrial
39	Pilanesberg expansion south	Include Marikana thornveld in the Pilanesberg	Terrestrial
40	Platinum Heritage Park corridor	Landscape ecological corridor for large mammals linking Madikwe, Pilanesberg and Vaalkop	Terrestrial
42	Sandpoort River	Very high conservation value wetland/river ecosystem	Aquatic
43	Sefatlhane River	Very high conservation value wetland/river ecosystem	Aquatic
47	Tolwane River	Very high conservation value wetland/river ecosystem	Aquatic
49	Vaalkop expansion east	Eastwards expansion of Vaalkop to include large game farming area and some Norite koppies	Terrestrial
50	Vaalkop expansion west	Critical ecological corridor link connecting Vaalkop and Pilanesberg	Terrestrial

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7.4 NW PROTECTED AREA NETWORK SPATIAL VISION

The NW PAES spatial vision is the high-level spatial plan that informs where on-the-ground PA development take place. The PAES spatial vision is a spatial interpretation of the NW PAES Strategic Goals (see Section 6). There are four high-level spatial themes guiding the development of the NW PA spatial vision:

1. Build a representative PA network that achieves biodiversity conservation targets for all vegetations types.
2. Build at least two (2) whole ecosystem-scale PA landscapes (i.e. >500 000 ha) that can conserve evolutionary-viable populations of large herbivores and predators (Molopo and Madikwe).
3. Build the core spatial elements of the landscape scale mega-living landscape ecological corridors. These corridors are central to achieving a variety of landscape-scale ecological processes, primarily those related to (1) facilitating biodiversity movement and (2) maintaining larger populations as key climate change adaptation strategies. Therefore, these corridors connect the bioregions of the province and country, and are aligned with the major climatic and environmental gradients

whilst being large enough to accommodate viable populations of large wildlife.

4. Build PA landscapes that drive the biodiversity economy and create opportunities for rural economic development and inclusion.

These planning principles are used to interpret and combine the various national, provincial and local scale PA spatial vision informants. The NW PAES spatial vision (Figure 14) can be summarised into four major ecological corridors:

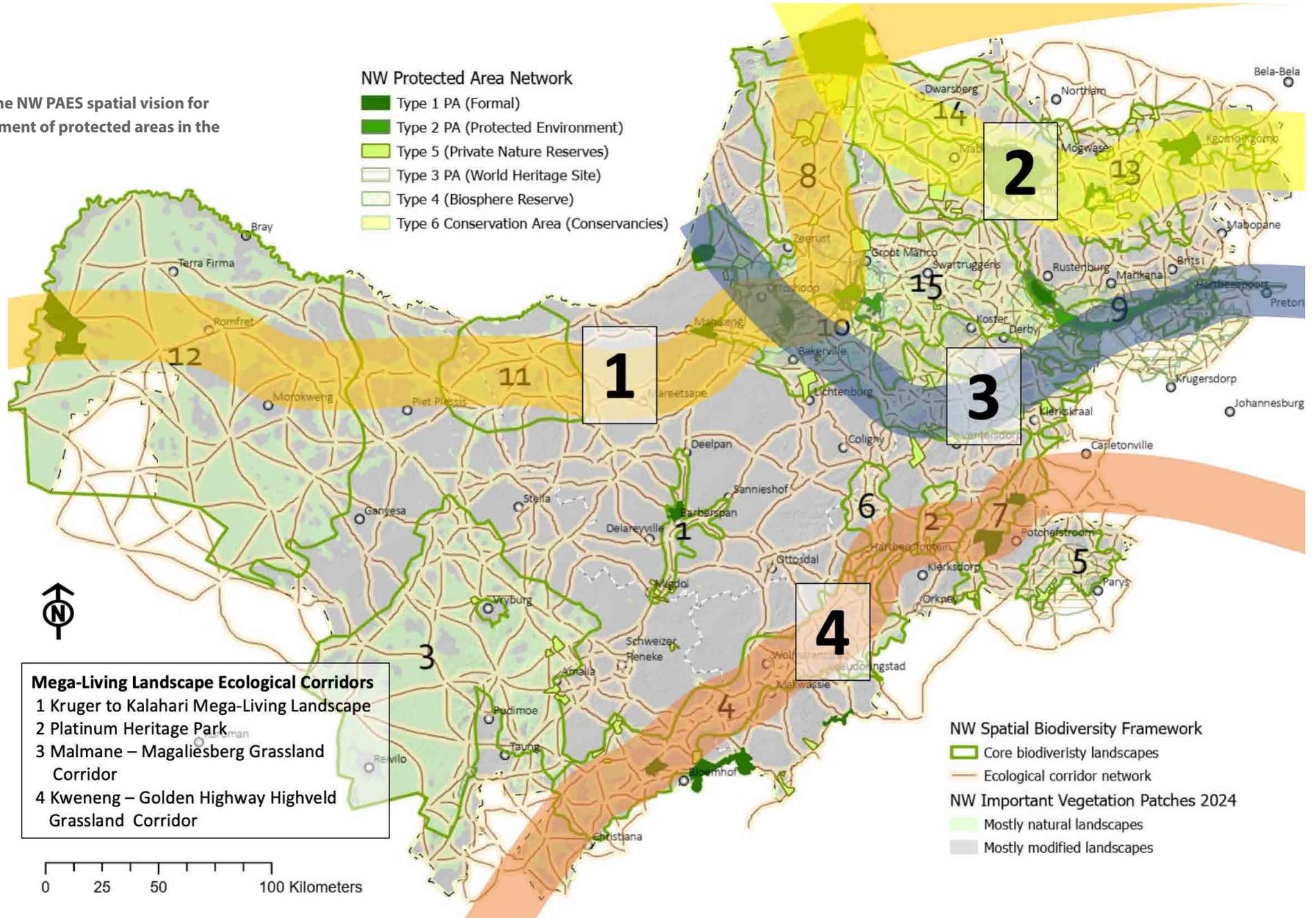
- 1. Kruger to Kalahari Mega-Living Landscape.** This corridor connects the Kruger National Park to the Kalahari National Park *via* the Wolkberg and Waterberg mountains. Within the NW there are four key nodes in this corridor, namely, (1) Madikwe, (2) Malmame Karst Landscape (Marico to Mahikeng), (3) Mositha Natural Area west of Mahikeng, and (4) Molopo Kalahari ecosystem.
- 2. Platinum Heritage Park.** Is a long standing PAES planning concept within the NW. This spatial concept has been expanded to extend eastwards *via* the Komo-Komo / Moretele River floodplains into Gauteng (Dinokeng), Mpumalanga (Ekangala) and Limpopo (Sekhukhune).
- 3. Malmame – Magaliesberg Grassland Corridor.** This grassland corridor connects the Mahikeng/ Malmame/Botsalano PAES node to the Ekangala

grasslands in Mpumalanga *via* the Malmame karst landscape, Magaliesberg and hominid WHS.

- 4. Kweneng – Golden Highway Highveld Grassland Corridor.** This corridor connects the mesic and arid grasslands of the southern Highveld. It is named after the metropolis of Kweneng, a massive pre-colonial city centred around Suikerbosrand in southern Gauteng.

The national/provincial-scale mega-living landscape corridors are complimented at the local scale by the NW biodiversity corridor network that is incorporated into the provincial CBA map. It is important to note that whilst there are clear biodiversity and ecological process conservation objectives that inform the alignment of the mega-living landscape corridors, the reality of planning in extensively modified anthropogenic landscapes means that corridors are largely aligned to the remaining intact ecosystems. Where possible the alignment of corridors also avoids developed areas where conflicts with other land uses could arise. Therefore, corridors may not be aligned optimally along ecological gradients, but rather achieve the ecological process objectives as best as possible within the spatial constraints presented by the remaining ecologic fabric and patterns of development within the province.

Figure 14. The NW PAES spatial vision for the development of protected areas in the province.



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7.5 NW PROTECTED AREA EXPANSION PRIORITIES 2025-2030

Due to limited resources for protected area (PA) development, it is not feasible to implement expansion efforts simultaneously across all identified areas. Strategic decisions are therefore required to determine where immediate attention should be focused and where actions can be deferred. As such, it is essential to identify a reduced set of spatial priorities for PA expansion (2025-2030) over the short, medium and long term. Recognizing that the full spatial vision of the Protected Area Expansion Strategy (PAES) cannot be implemented all at once, informed prioritization is necessary to guide effective and impactful conservation action.

Assessing and selecting priority areas can be based on one or a selection of the following groups of informants:

- ▶ Conservation goals. How important is an area for achieving conservation targets? How well sites contribute to achieving our conservation goals and targets is certainly the primary consideration for prioritising implementation action. In the NW context, however, given that levels of protection are generally low almost any PA development in the province will contribute to achieving conservation targets. As the PAN develops further and levels of protection improve this criterion will become more important in determining priorities.

- ▶ Biodiversity risk. What the likelihood is of an area being lost to other land uses should there be no action must inform the prioritisation of conservation action. Biodiversity risk can help determine the sequence in which the PAES is implemented. Areas at risk of being lost to other land uses (i.e. high risk landscapes) are clear priorities as doing nothing here may mean that targets will not be able to be achieved when action is finally scheduled at some later date. Given ongoing habitat loss in these landscapes the ability to achieve conservation goals is rapidly diminishing, e.g. The platinum belt where there is high development and settlement pressure. In landscapes with few competing land uses or few threats (i.e. low risk landscapes) no action now may not compromise achieving conservation targets as these landscapes will likely remain intact into the future, e.g. the Kalahari region in the NW where rates of habitat loss to other land uses is very low. Risk can be complemented with an assessment of the types of conservation activities that will be undertaken when implementing the PAES. For example, highly modified landscapes where conservation priorities may comprise scattered patches of remnant vegetation still used for livestock grazing (e.g. Vaal-Vet Sandy Grassland) may be more suitable for stewardship compared to a landscape that is mostly in a natural condition that can support

populations of large mammal species may be more conducive to private nature reserve or outright purchase.

- ▶ Expert opinion is a valid means of setting priorities as stakeholders involved in on-the-ground conservation management and PA development have hands-on experience of biodiversity conservation, land use and PA implementation. Their considered view of spatial priorities is particularly important especially where the other informants considered are unable to discriminate between sites.
- ▶ Existing initiatives. All other factors being equal or in the absence of any other information, continuing to focus on existing PA development initiatives is a good PA implementation strategy. In the NW context, where the PAN is still some way away from achieving our conservation goals, all current initiatives are contributing towards achieving targets and therefore it is good to “continuing the course” as this capitalises on the momentum built with the existing initiatives.
- ▶ Non-biodiversity value. Non-biodiversity conservation related values can also be considered when prioritising areas for conservation action. As the PAN provides a wide range of direct and indirect societal social and economic benefits, it is useful and necessary to consider the potential to deliver these benefits when setting spatial priorities.



In Table 10, each geographic focus area is ranked against eleven criteria (Table 9) that represent (1) conservation goals, (2) biodiversity risk, (3) economic development and (4) the expert view.

Table 9. Summary of the criterion used to assess implementation priority for PAES focus areas.

Category	Criterion Name	Description
Conservation goals	TARGET	% of focus area with vegetation types NOT or POORLY protected
Biodiversity risk	ECO_STATUS	% of focus area with vegetation types with ecosystem status CE, EN and VU
	Cost_MEAN	MARXAN mean cost within focus area. MARXAN cost is a relative value reflecting threat to biodiversity based on historic change in land cover and proximity to people.
	Cost_5km_MEAN	MARXAN mean cost within 5km buffer of focus area
	LC_CHANGE94	% of natural landcover lost since 1994 within 5km buffer of focus area
	LC_CHANGE14	% of natural landcover lost since 2014 within 5km buffer of focus area
Economic development	COMMUNITY	% of focus area within the historic Bophuthatswana
	BUILD_sum	Total number of buildings within focus area and surrounding 5km buffer. Building density can be used to gauge economic need as well as biodiversity risk.
	BUILD_ha	Number of buildings per ha within focus area and surrounding 5km buffer.
Expert view	EXPERT	Priority focus areas based on expert opinion
	CURRENT_PAES	The focus area is a current NWPB PA development focus areas

PAES focal area implementation priorities are present in Table 9. Focal areas are ranked based on the weighted sum of the assessment criteria presented in Table 8. Four implementation strategies are considered when combining the assessment criteria, each reflecting different investment approaches to PAES development.

These strategies include:

1. A balanced focus that considers all assessment criteria equally;

2. A social focus that emphasises economic development criteria;
3. A risk focus that emphasises risks to biodiversity; and,
4. An expert focus that emphasises expert views and current PAES implementation.

In Table 9 the top 6-12 focal areas are definitely high short-term priorities. The remainder of focal areas can be considered medium to long-term priorities, or opportunistic priorities.

It is very important to note that all focal areas identified are important and necessary in order for the PAES to achieve its conservation goals. This analysis merely ranks the implementation priority of sites based on the information at hand, and provides a transparent and accountable framework for planning and executing on the spatial focus aspects of the PAES.

2025-2030 PROTECTED AREA TARGETS AND SPATIAL PRIORITIES

7.

Table 10. Summary of conservation goals, biodiversity risk, economic development and expert view criteria used to assess implementation priority for PAES focal areas. See Table 9 for the names and descriptions of criteria used. The left half of the table contains absolute values and the right half relativized values. For each criterion the top third of values are highlighted.

ID	NAME	TARGET	ECO STATUS	Cost_MEAN	Cost_5km_MEAN	LC_CHANGE94	LC_CHANGE14	COMMUNITY	BUILD_sum	BUILD_ha	TARGET	ECO STATUS	Cost_MEAN	Cost_5km_MEAN	LC_CHANGE94	LC_CHANGE14	COMMUNITY	BUILD_sum	BUILD_ha	EXPERT	CURRENT PAES	
1	Kgomo-Kgomo floodplains	0.29	0.06	606	636	8.99	2.94	0.83	416,973	2.36	29	8	88	80	57	44	83	100	100	1		
5	Norite koppies	0.78	0.21	446	640	15.22	4.46	0.58	67,738	1.20	78	24	36	81	100	70	58	15	51			
6	Magaliesberg PE expansion	0.75	0.45	430	525	12.08	4.11	0.01	283,770	1.09	74	53	31	51	78	64	1	68	46		1	
16	Highveld National Park	0.99	0.24	420	515	9.45	3.20	0.00	116,847	0.91	99	29	27	48	60	49	0	27	38			
7	Cradle-Magaliesberg link	0.70	0.43	499	518	13.18	6.23	0.00	69,209	0.87	69	51	53	49	86	100	0	16	36		1	
8	Platinum Heritage Park Pilaesberg buffer	0.22	0.09	384	484	11.48	5.22	0.81	184,444	0.62	21	11	16	40	74	83	81	44	26	1	1	
4	Platinum Heritage Park East	0.09	0.00	410	467	7.91	3.05	0.36	182,988	0.52	8	0	24	35	49	46	36	43	22	1	1	
17	Vredefort Dome	0.80	0.22	511	543	8.59	3.07	0.00	61,958	0.35	80	26	57	56	54	47	0	14	15			
23	Ghaap Plateau Taung	1.00	0.00	335	389	3.73	1.57	0.96	45,425	0.36	100	0	0	14	20	21	96	10	15	1		
2	Borakalalo expansion south	0.24	0.37	608	553	5.84	1.77	1.00	13,693	0.28	23	44	89	58	35	25	100	2	11	1		
21	Barberspan / Harts River expansion	1.00	0.60	613	710	7.88	1.45	0.30	99,291	0.24	100	71	91	100	49	19	30	23	10	1	1	
9	Platinum Heritage Park West	0.18	0.01	396	449	6.49	1.93	0.89	97,988	0.23	17	1	20	30	39	27	89	23	9		1	
20	Wolmaranstad dry highveld grasslands	1.00	0.83	642	679	10.80	2.32	0.00	27,532	0.19	100	98	100	92	69	34	0	6	8			
19	Elandslaagte Ranch	1.00	0.85	447	483	7.30	2.75	0.00	31,552	0.18	100	100	37	39	45	41	0	7	7			
15	Magaliesberg - Mariko link	0.88	0.55	539	534	9.92	2.06	0.00	23,832	0.18	88	65	66	53	63	29	0	5	7		1	
13	Botsalano-Mahikeng-Malmane corridor	0.99	0.11	410	472	6.30	2.21	0.02	39,419	0.15	99	13	24	36	38	32	2	8	6		1	
12	Marico River Catchment	0.82	0.16	374	404	5.91	2.55	0.01	36,960	0.15	82	19	13	18	35	38	1	8	6		1	
24	Ghaap Plateau	1.00	0.00	376	402	3.93	1.57	0.00	23,211	0.12	100	0	13	18	21	21	0	4	5			
18	Klerksdorp highveld grasslands	1.00	0.38	484	592	10.18	2.10	0.00	21,286	0.10	100	45	49	69	65	30	0	4	4			
10	Madikwe expansion south	0.30	0.04	393	423	5.55	1.73	0.07	31,541	0.09	29	5	19	24	33	24	7	7	3		1	
22	Western Highveld grasslands and panveld	1.00	0.73	499	543	10.51	4.07	0.00	26,619	0.08	100	86	53	55	67	63	0	5	3	1	1	
14	Mooi River grassland and catchment	1.00	0.11	411	492	8.63	2.18	0.00	7,205	0.05	100	13	25	42	54	31	0	1	2	1		
3	Borakalalo expansion north	0.01	0.00	424	413	4.22	1.13	0.81	4,686	0.07	0	0	29	21	24	14	81	0	2	1		
26	Molopo Ecosystem Priority Area	0.67	0.04	403	410	3.04	1.02	0.42	54,233	0.03	66	5	22	20	15	12	42	12	1			
25	Mositha Natural Area	1.00	0.17	414	480	6.19	1.41	0.28	10,663	0.04	100	20	26	39	37	18	28	1	1			
27	Molopo NR short & medium term expansion	0.07	0.04	356	365	1.19	0.38	0.00	11,250	0.02	6	4	7	8	2	1	0	2	0		1	
28	Tswalu-Molopo Expansion Area	0.33	0.00	335	335	0.84	0.32	0.36	16,398	0.01												
11	Madikwe TFCA																					
29	Molopo Transfrontier Conservation Area																					



	ID	FOCUS AREA NAME	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA					IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY				
			1. BIODIVERSITY	2. RISK	3. SOCIAL	4. EXPERT	5. CURRENT PAES	BALANCED FOCUS	SOCIAL FOCUS	RISK FOCUS	EXPERT FOCUS	AVERAGE
SHORT-TERM PRIORITIES	21	Barberspan / Harts River expansion	1.00	0.52	0.21	1	1	0.75	0.60	0.72	0.95	0.75
	22	Western Highveld grasslands and pan-veld	1.00	0.47	0.03	1	1	0.70	0.51	0.69	0.95	0.71
	8	Platinum Heritage Park Pilaesberg buffer	0.21	0.42	0.50	1	1	0.63	0.68	0.65	0.94	0.72
	1	Kgomo-Kgomo floodplains	0.29	0.68	0.94	1		0.58	0.71	0.60	0.52	0.60
	4	Platinum Heritage Park East	0.08	0.31	0.34	1	1	0.55	0.59	0.58	0.93	0.66
	6	Magaliesberg PE expansion	0.74	0.56	0.38		1	0.54	0.47	0.54	0.51	0.51
	7	Cradle-Magaliesberg link	0.69	0.56	0.17		1	0.48	0.37	0.52	0.51	0.47
	16	Highveld National Park	0.99	0.40	0.22	1		0.52	0.39	0.46	0.49	0.46
	15	Magaliesberg - Mariko link	0.88	0.41	0.04	1	1	0.47	0.30	0.45	0.49	0.43
	2	Borakalalo expansion south	0.23	0.38	0.38	1		0.40	0.42	0.42	0.49	0.43
MEDIUM-TERM PRIORITIES	13	Botsalano-Mahikeng-Malmane corridor	0.99	0.22	0.05		1	0.45	0.30	0.36	0.47	0.40
	23	Ghaap Plateau Taung	1.00	0.11	0.40	1		0.50	0.44	0.33	0.46	0.43
	14	Mooi River grassland and catchment	1.00	0.24	0.01	1		0.45	0.28	0.37	0.47	0.39
	9	Platinum Heritage Park West	0.17	0.21	0.40	1	1	0.36	0.41	0.34	0.47	0.39
	12	Marico River Catchment	0.82	0.20	0.05		1	0.41	0.28	0.34	0.47	0.38
	3	Borakalalo expansion north	0.00	0.13	0.28	1		0.28	0.34	0.28	0.46	0.34
	10	Madikwe expansion south	0.29	0.16	0.06		1	0.30	0.26	0.30	0.47	0.33
	27	Molopo NR short & medium term expansion	0.06	0.03	0.01		1	0.22	0.21	0.22	0.45	0.28
	5	Norite koppies	0.78	0.54	0.41			0.35	0.28	0.33	0.05	0.25
	20	Wolmaranstad dry highveld grasslands	1.00	0.58	0.05			0.33	0.13	0.34	0.06	0.21
LONG-TERM PRIORITIES	19	Elandslaagte Ranch	1.00	0.39	0.05			0.29	0.11	0.25	0.04	0.17
	18	Klerksdorp highveld grasslands	1.00	0.38	0.03			0.28	0.10	0.24	0.04	0.17
	17	Vredefort Dome	0.80	0.38	0.10			0.26	0.12	0.24	0.04	0.16
	25	Mositha Natural Area	1.00	0.20	0.10			0.26	0.12	0.16	0.02	0.14
	26	Molopo Ecosystem Priority Area	0.66	0.12	0.18			0.19	0.13	0.10	0.01	0.11
	24	Ghaap Plateau	1.00	0.12	0.03			0.23	0.08	0.11	0.01	0.11
	28	Tswalu-Molopo Expansion Area	0.00	0.00	0.00			0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	11	Madikwe TFCA	0.00	0.00	0.00			0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	29	Molopo Transfrontier Conservation Area	0.00	0.00	0.00			0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Table 11. PAES focal area implementation priorities. The implementation score is calculated from the weighted sum of the five assessment criteria. Four implementation strategies are considered: (1) a balanced focus that considers all criteria equally; (2) a social focus that over weights economic development criteria; (3) a risk focus that over weights risks to biodiversity; and, (4) an expert focus that over weights the expert inputs. The weights used to combine criteria are contained at the end of the table.

Implementation Strategy	Weights					CHECK SUM
	1. BIODIVERSITY	2. RISK	3. SOCIAL	4. EXPERT	5. CURRENT PAES	
1 Balanced Focus	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.2	1.00
2 Social Focus	0.05	0.10	0.45	0.20	0.20	1.00
3 Risk Focus	0.05	0.50	0.05	0.20	0.2	1.00
4 Expert Focus	0.00	0.10	0.00	0.45	0.45	1.00

2025-2030 PROTECTED AREA TARGETS AND SPATIAL PRIORITIES

Table 12. Descriptions of the 29 NW PAES spatial focus areas. The ID numbers in this table correspond to the polygon numbers in Figure 15.

ID	Focus Area Name	Description of Focus Area
1	Kgomo-Kgomo floodplains	Area of outstanding wetlands and floodplains associated with the Moretele River providing keystone habitat for migratory aquatic birds. This river corridor provides the eastern extension in the Platinum Heritage Park connecting with Gauteng (Dinokeng) and Mpumalanga (Ekangala wilderness). Very high ecosystem service value for flood attenuation from Gauteng and improving water quality for downstream users. Highly degraded and threatened ecosystem in need of protection and restoration. Suitable for community linked activities and stewardship.
2	Borakalalo expansion south	Platinum Heritage Park East. An area offering opportunity to expand the biodiversity economy offerings of Borakalalo and the wider Platinum Heritage Park.
3	Borakalalo expansion north	The objective of this focus area is to connect Borakalalo (Platinum Heritage Park) with the Kruger to Kalahari Mega-Living Landscape in the Waterberg. This corridor is bordered by several communities that could benefit from the biodiversity economy opportunities created by this corridor.
4	Platinum Heritage Park East	The eastern leg of the Platinum Heritage Park links Pilanesberg to Borakalalo <i>via</i> Vaalkop NR. It is an excellent node for wildlife economy development. The existing momentum in PA development in this focus area should continue and be inclusive of the eastwards Komo-Komo Moretele floodplain and northwards Borakalalo – Waterberg corridors that link the Platinum Heritage Park to neighbouring provinces.
5	Norite koppies	Enigmatic boulder koppies and hills are an aesthetic, biodiversity and cultural feature of the Platinum Belt. Highly threatened by quarrying and encroaching settlement there are no protected areas safeguarding a representative proportion of this significant landscape for future generation. The norites are a perennial urgent conservation priority, however, given their island-like distribution within a highly modified matrix they are not easily suitable to a large PA. Important that land use planning decision-making is more closely managed to limit loss. Ideal area for receiving biodiversity offset in relation to quarry activities and opportunities stewardship PAs.



ID	Focus Area Name	Description of Focus Area
6	Magaliesberg Protected Environment expansion	The Magaliesberg is the most significant centre of species diversity in the NW. It also has very high cultural and recreational importance. In 30-50 years' time the entire Magaliesberg mountain chain will be entirely surrounded by urban landscapes. Now is the last opportunity to safeguard additional areas to expand the core biodiversity landscapes and improve connectivity with (1) the Cradle WHS, (2) Pilanesberg Nature Reserve and (3) northwards through the Marikana Thornveld to connect to the Platinum Heritage Park around Vaalkop NR.
7	Cradle-Magaliesberg link	Whilst the Cradle WHS and Magaliesberg PE are well protected, the ecological connectivity between the two has no protection. Given the very high urban development pressures in the region it is essential to tie-down these ecological corridors. Also, the Skeerpoort River, that lies at the centre of this link, is the highest biodiversity value river in the NW. It is the most likely focal feature around which to conserve a broader network of ecological linkages connecting across the valleys..
8	Platinum Heritage Park Pilanesberg buffer	The Pilanesberg Nature Reserve is at the heart of the Platinum Heritage Park mega-living landscape. Due to very rapid urban and mining development in recent decades the park is at high risk of being entirely cut-off from its surrounding landscape. Securing the border of the park and preserving the last vestiges of ecological connectivity with the broader Platinum Heritage Park is an urgent immediate priority the PAES.
9	Platinum Heritage Park West	This is the western arm of the Platinum Heritage Park connecting Pilanesberg to Madikwe. Expansive bushveld areas are ideal for wildlife related biodiversity economy development. Managing the development of human settlement and mining in this corridor will be critical to preventing the ecological corridor from being cut.
10	Madikwe expansion south	This is an existing PA development focus area and is part of the Kruger to Kalahari Mega-Living Landscape. This landscape offers opportunities to create an extensive bushveld PA focused on wildlife economy. When combined with Madikwe and the Platinum Heritage Park there is the potential here to create an ecosystem-level park in excess of 500 000 ha that has the ability to support evolutionary <i>viable</i> populations of large herbivores and predators. A notable biodiversity feature in this corridor landscape is the remaining occurrence of savanna vegetation, specifically Dwaalboom Thornveld — a “grassland-like” savanna on black cotton soils — within communal lands. This area represents one of the few remaining examples of this vegetation type in the country. Elsewhere, bush encroachment has largely transformed similar systems into bushveld. The Brakfonteinspruit and Sandpoort River, both high conservation value river systems, originate in this focus area and flow into the Marico River.

2025-2030 PROTECTED AREA TARGETS AND SPATIAL PRIORITIES

ID	Focus Area Name	Description of Focus Area
11	Madikwe Transfrontier Conservation Area	Trans-frontier conservation area expanding Madikwe northwards into Botswana.
12	Marico River Catchment	This is an existing PA development focus area and is part of the Kruger to Kalahari Mega-Living Landscape. This area also links to the Malmane karst landscape – Magaliesberg Grassland Corridor. An area of high scenic value and also ecological service value as it protects the headwaters of the Marco River and Marico Eye. High land owner willingness and land uses that are aligned with protected area expansion make this a low hanging fruit for PA expansion.
13	Botsalano-Mahikeng-Malmane corridor	Expand and coalesce the three provincial nature reserves into a single ecological unit. Once combined the area covers the grassland/ Kalahari ecotone and includes a variety of grassland, bushveld and wetland ecosystems. By growing this protected area node it becomes possible to support larger, more sustainable wildlife populations which in turn would support a larger biodiversity economy. Being located on the outskirts of Mahikeng presents a number of biodiversity economy development opportunities.
14	Mooi River grassland and catchment	The Mooi River catchment is part of the Malmane karst landscape. It is the last remaining mostly natural condition mesic highveld grassland water catchment in the western highveld. There are large areas of natural grassland with extensive eyes and wetlands in excellent ecological condition. This is a strategic water source area that supplies the Klerkskraal Dam. Water from this dam is critically important for diluting acid mine drainage from the Careltonville / Wonderfonteinsruit before supplying Potchefstroom with water. The caves at Weltevreden are also a culturally important sites. For these reasons, this is the only PAES focus area where the creation of a new provincial PA is recommended.
15	Magaliesberg - Marico link	Spatial opportunities to link the Magaliesberg to the Malmane karst landscape. This could be a single corridor or multiple connections depending on land owner willingness. This is mostly bushveld bushveld grading into highveld grassland with few competing land uses. Current land use already has a large wildlife ranching and lifestyle component that are compatible with protected area development. The western end of the identified corridor area contains the Bultfontein wetlands, large area of natural wetlands surrounded by highveld grasslands.
16	Highveld National Park	One of the few remaining large expanses of mesic Highveld grasslands in the NW. Being located on the border of a large urban areas presents management problems, but also opportunities to reimagine protected areas focused on community involvement and



ID	Focus Area Name	Description of Focus Area
		benefit sharing. This is a grassland park so the management focus should be on plants, so the ecological role played by wildlife can be replaced by livestock thus providing opportunities for communities to be directly involved in park ecological management.
17	Vredefort Dome	The Vredefort Dome is a region of high cultural and scenic / natural beauty value in the NW. Effort should be put into normalising the declaration of the WHS. Whilst the koppies and hills of the focus area are well protected, the Vredefort dome grasslands are highly modified and fragmented. Effort needs to be put into finding and securing stewardship agreements to protect the last remaining remnants of this vegetation type as witness sites for future generations.
18	Klerksdorp highveld grasslands	<p>The south-western extent of the mesic Highveld Grassland, particularly the Rand Highveld Grassland around Geduld north of Hartbeesfontein, represents a highly significant area due to its transitional ecological character. The landscape includes higher-lying areas and scattered hills dominated by Andesite Mountain Bushveld, with rare remnants of Vaal-Vet Sandy Grassland found in the valley systems. Although much of the area consists of production landscapes, the presence of scattered grassland remnants makes it well-suited to biodiversity stewardship initiatives. This region also forms part of the broader Kweneng–Golden Highway Grassland Corridor.</p> <p>Faan Meintjies Nature Reserve is located within this focus area. Any opportunity to expand the reserve in order to establish a larger and more ecologically functional conservation unit would be strongly recommended. In addition, the high number of mining properties in and around this area, particularly to the south of Hartbeesfontein and west of Klerksdorp, may offer significant stewardship opportunities, especially for the protection of the threatened Vaal-Vet Sandy Grassland.</p>
19	Elandslaagte Ranch	Elandslaagte Ranch represents a low hanging fruit opportunity to create a protected area within the Klerksdorp Thornveld ecosystem. There is good potential here to create an expansive protected area that could accommodate large herbivores and predators with access to Vaal River frontage. Located close to Klerksdorp and adjacent to the N12 present excellent opportunities for biodiversity economy development.
20	Wolmaransstad dry highveld grasslands	Between Klerksdorp and Bloemhof pockets of Vaal-Vet Sandy Grassland and Western Highveld Sandy Grassland are grassland conservation targets. As these grassland remnants area scattered through the agricultural landscape this focus area is ideal for stewardship. This area is part of the Kwaneng-Gold Highway Grassland Corridor.

2025-2030 PROTECTED AREA TARGETS AND SPATIAL PRIORITIES

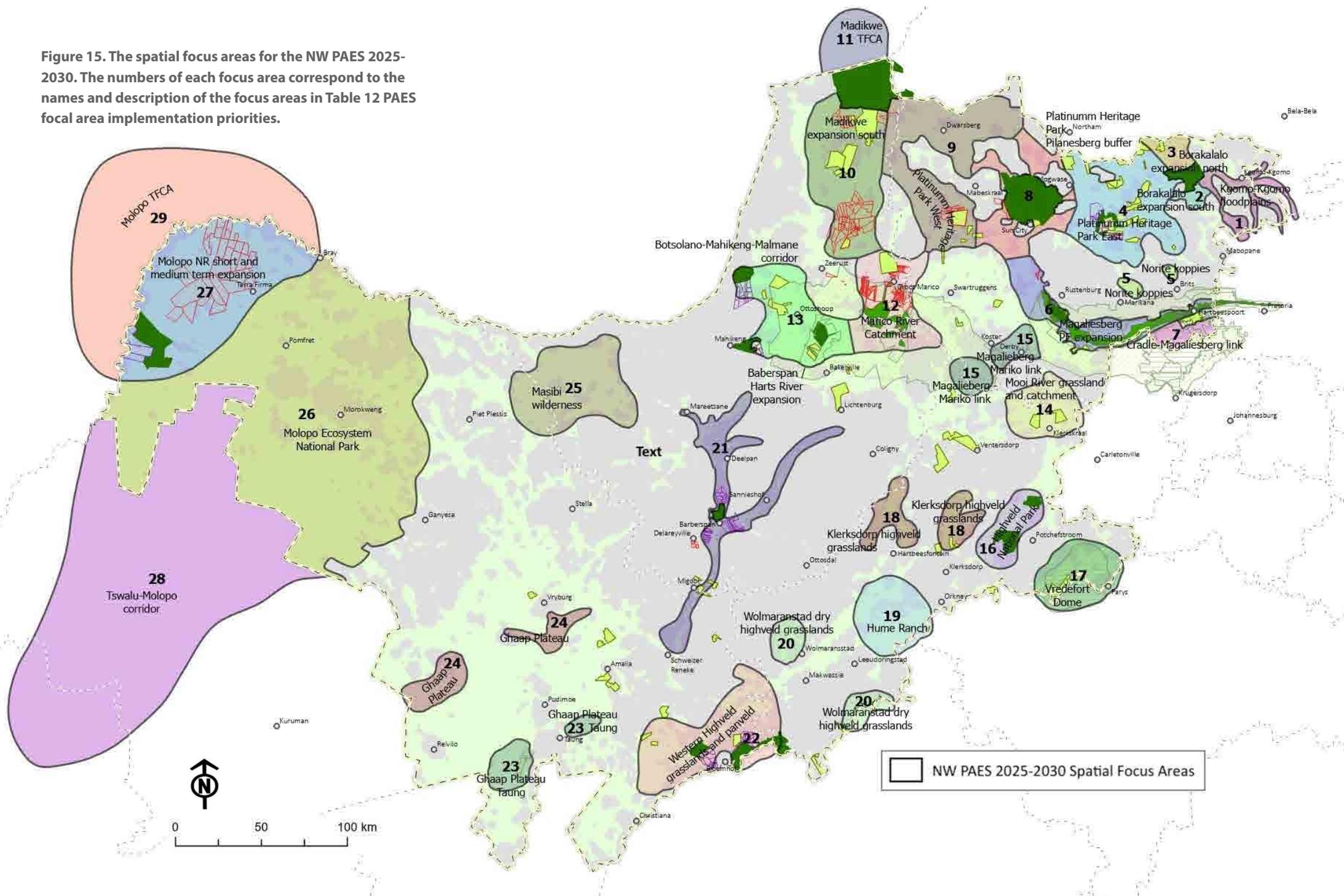
ID	Focus Area Name	Description of Focus Area Key Biodiversity and PAES Attributes
21	Barberspan Harts River System Expansion Area	Whilst Barberspan and the Harts River are recognised high priority wetland and bird conservation features, this focus area is located in the heart of the critically endangered Vaal-Vet Sandy Grassland ecosystem and is also at the heart of the north-south ecological corridor connecting the Malmane karst landscape grasslands to the western Highveld grasslands in the south of the province.
22	Western Highveld grasslands and panveld	This is an existing PA focus area centred around the expansion of the SA Lombard and Bloemhof Dam NRs to conserve the endangered Western Highveld Sandy Grassland. Another important ecosystem in this landscape are the extensive alluvial systems and associated wetlands and pans. Un-regulated diamond mining and lack of fire are major threats to these ecosystems. This is a scenic landscape (wide open grass plains), close to a large urban centre and N12 thus offering good tourism potential.
23	Ghaap Plateau Taung	The Ghaap Plateau is a vast are of relatively un-modified natural landscapes known for its strategic groundwater recharge importance. The Taung WHS and Taung Dam have high cultural and scenic landscape value that offer good biodiversity economy related economic opportunities to surrounding communities. Other areas identified by experts in this area include wetland / pan systems of the dolomite landscapes and the scenic Klein Harts River kloof area. Is generally not a priority area as threats are regarded as low.
24	Ghaap Plateau	The Ghaap Plateau is another karst landscape within the NW and is an important strategic ground water source area that supplies water to all the communities on its northern flank around Ganyesa. The physical structure of this karst landscape differs significantly to that of the Malmane landscape. The Ghaap Plateau is mostly flat plains and panveld intersected by long low rocky ridges called kluftkarren. This is very unique to the Ghaap Plateau in South Africa. Other than the Taung WHS very little is known about the biodiversity, cultural and scenic value of this landscape, and biodiversity threats are considered low. This is not an immediate priority area for the PAES as further investigation into specific PA priorities is required.
25	Mositha Natural Area	The Mositha Natural Area, located west of Mahikeng, is renowned as the last remaining area in the province where free-ranging red hartebeest still occur. The landscape is characterised by tall, scenic Kalahari woodland, which also supports several known breeding sites for white-backed vultures. Given its ecological significance, the Mositha Natural Area represents a critical area for expansion within the Kruger-to-Kalahari mega-living landscape initiative."
26	Molopo Ecosystem Priority Area	The long-term vision for the Molopo Nature Reserve is the establishment of a large, ecosystem-level conservation landscape



ID	Focus Area Name	Description of Focus Area Key Biodiversity and PAES Attributes
		<p>exceeding 500,000 hectares (by combing focal areas 26 to 29). This expansive park would be capable of supporting ecologically viable populations of large herbivores and predators. The area’s low human population density and minimal competing land uses make it particularly suitable for such an initiative. The envisioned park has the potential to become a flagship conservation area, comparable in ecological and economic value to some of South Africa’s premier protected areas such as Kruger and Kgalagadi Transfrontier Parks.”</p>
27	Molopo Nature Reserve Expansion Area	<p>This is an existing protected area development node focused on expanding the Molopo Nature Reserve to create the core area of the Molopo Kalahari ecosystem park. This focus area includes the short and medium term goals identified in current expansion plans and by stakeholders.</p>
28	Tswalu-Molopo Expansion Area	<p>A mega living landscape connecting the Molopo Kalahari ecosystem to Tswalu Nature Reserve in the Northern Cape.</p>
	Molopo Transfrontier Conservation Area	<p>Trans-frontier conservation area linking the Molopo NR to Mabuasehube Game Reserve and Kgalagadi Transfortntier Park in Botswana, a distance of 75km. This TFCA will be the eastern most section of the Kruger to Kalahari Mega-Living Landscape that will effectively restore a continuous ecological corridor link between the Kruger National Park in the east and the Kalahari National Park in the west.</p>



Figure 15. The spatial focus areas for the NW PAES 2025-2030. The numbers of each focus area correspond to the names and description of the focus areas in Table 12 PAES focal area implementation priorities.





**MECHANISMS AND TOOLS FOR
PROTECTED AREA EXPANSION**

MECHANISMS AND TOOLS FOR PROTECTED AREA EXPANSION

NEMPAA is an innovative legal instrument that enables the declaration of protected areas on any type of landownership in South Africa (Figure 16).

The mechanisms for protected area declaration enable a conservation authority to purchase land or to have land donated or bequeathed to it, which it can then declare as a protected area.

State-owned land, administered by a government entity other than a conservation authority (e.g., Department of Public Works) can be declared with the concurrence of the Minister or MEC responsible for the administration of the land (s34 of NEMPAA) and state-owned land that is held in trust for a community (e.g., administered by a traditional authority). Privately-owned land, which would include land owned by individuals, companies, trusts and communal property associations (CPAs) can be declared through the written consent of the landowner in the case of a protected environment or through a written agreement between the Minister, the MEC or SANParks and the landowner in the case of a national park or nature reserve. The terms of such written agreements must be recorded in a notarial deed agreement and endorsed on the title deeds of the property (s35(3) of NEMPAA).

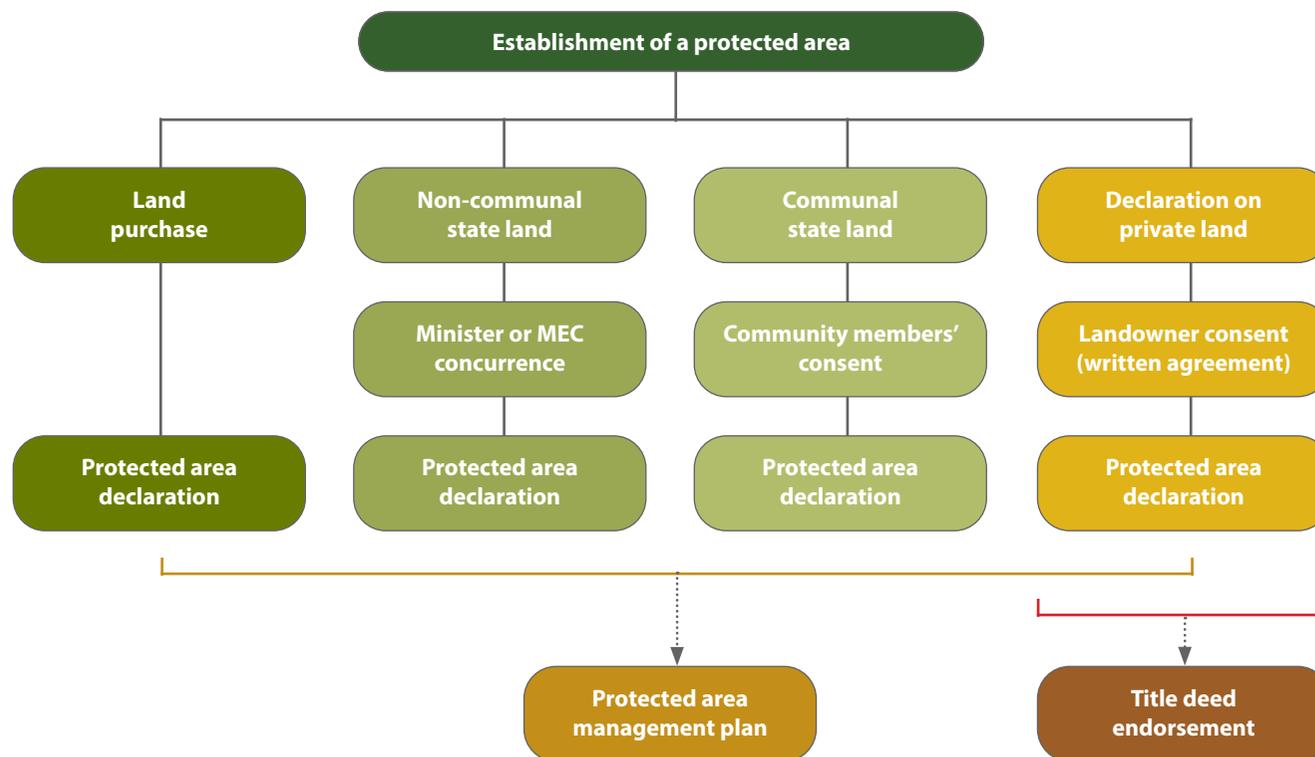


Figure 16. Establishment of protected areas on different types of landholdings in South Africa.



8.1 ACQUISITION OF LAND

Acquisition of land through purchase, donation or bequest is considered the conventional means for state conservation authorities to expand protected areas. Land is acquired by a conservation authority, either for inclusion in existing protected areas or to establish a new protected area. Such approaches are relatively simple and effective for protected area expansion, but they are also the costliest options both in terms of acquisition of land and its management once it has been acquired. Because of this land acquisition is not a financially feasible means of achieving protected area expansion targets at scale, particularly in the context of the ambition of Target 3 of the GBF. Rather, land acquisition should be utilised strategically when opportunities arise to purchase key parcels of land for the achievement of clear outcomes (e.g., strategic consolidation of existing protected areas, linking of protected areas through corridors, etc.).

The primary purpose of land acquisition should thus be to improve the management effectiveness of existing protected areas that address deficiencies in protected area design and improve ecological connectivity, or that address specific opportunities such as socio-economic beneficiation, linked to the wildlife economy.

8.2 DECLARATION OF STATE LAND

8.2.1 State-owned land

The declaration of state-owned land that is administered by a government department other than a conservation authority (e.g. Department of Public Works, the South African Defence Force, etc.) is an option for protected area expansion, particularly if the land involved is within a CBA, has biodiversity that would warrant a protected area declaration and would contribute towards protected area expansion targets.

As stated above, such a declaration would require the concurrence of the Minister or MEC responsible for the administration of that land or it would require that the land be reassigned to the conservation authority. It is recommended that an audit of all state land within the NW be undertaken to determine ownership and existing land use. Through this process, areas of land that may contribute towards the protected area system and play a role in achieving socio-economic benefits such as those linked to the wildlife economy, may be identified. A process of negotiation with the government entities responsible for them may then be undertaken to determine the feasibility of their inclusion in the protected area system.

A clear consultation process that meets the requirements of NEMPAA and IPILRA has been developed (Figure 17)

The focus should be on areas that are priorities for protected area expansion, ecologically important areas such as strategic water source areas, areas that would enhance existing protected area management effectiveness through improved protected area design or greater ecological connectivity and areas that would facilitate local economic development, linked to initiatives such as the wildlife economy.

MECHANISMS AND TOOLS FOR PROTECTED AREA EXPANSION

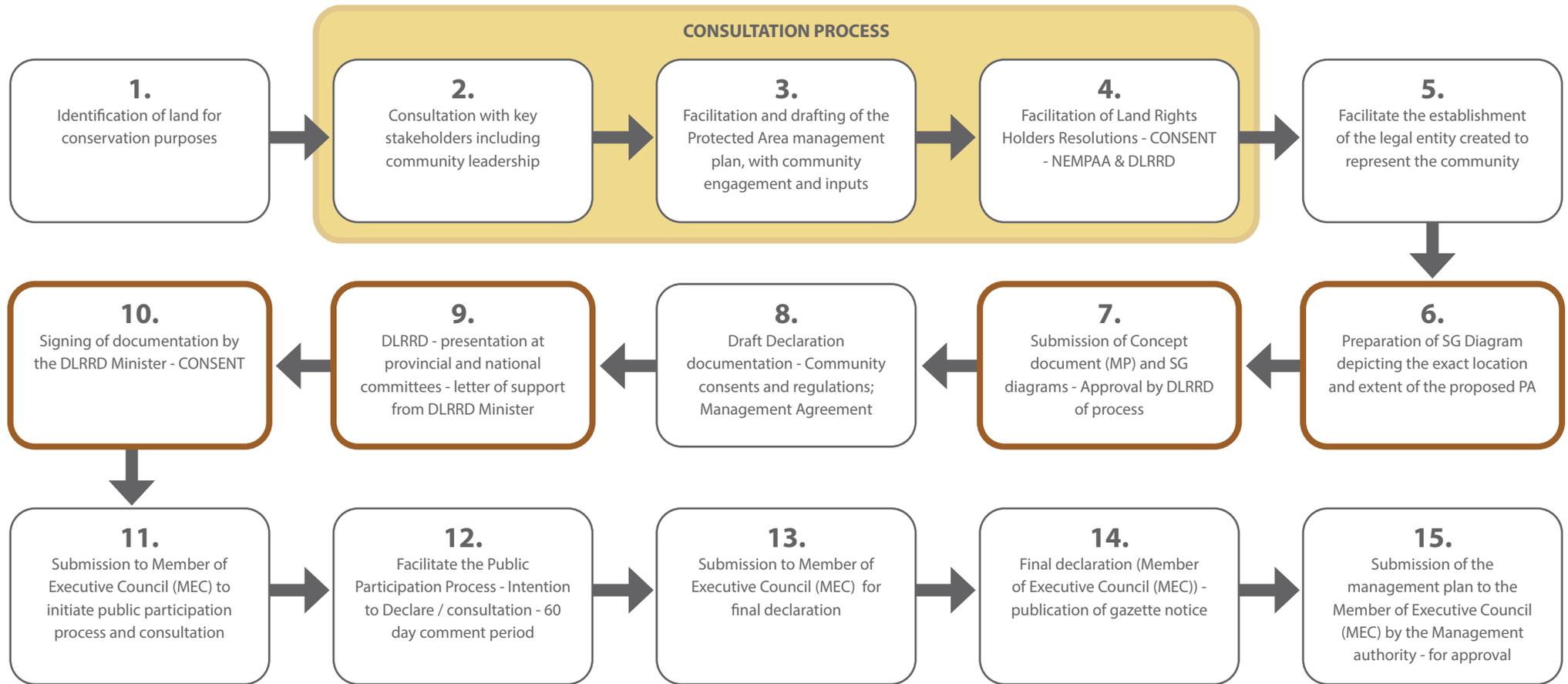


Figure 17. Process flow for the declaration of state-owned communal land.

 DLRRD PROCESS NEM: PAA PROCESS



8.2.2 Communal state-owned land

There are large areas of state-owned land that are administered by traditional authorities, usually in historic Bantustans that existed during apartheid. These areas of land usually fall under the administration of the Department of Land Reform and Rural Development. If the community beneficiaries associated with them request it, such land may be declared as protected areas. Several applications of this nature have been made by communities wishing to protect their land for activities such as sustainable agriculture or linked to the wildlife economy. The pending declaration of the Maloti Thaba Tsametsi Protected Environment is an example of the declaration of a protected area on such land.

The legal processes for these declarations are complex, as they require the concurrence of the Minister or MEC responsible for the administration of the land and they require the consent of the community involved. Such consent is usually obtained through the implementation of a process that complies with section 2 of the Interim Protection of Informal Land Rights Act, 1996 (Act No. 31 of 1996) (IPILRA). As the department responsible for the administration of such land is usually the Department of Land Reform and Rural Development (DLRRD), its officials should lead the process to

obtain a community resolution as defined in IPILRA in close consultation with the conservation authorities involved. A clear consultation process that meets the requirements of NEMPAA and IPILRA has been developed (Figure 17).

This declaration of such land is a priority of the Land Reform and Biodiversity Stewardship Initiative (LRBSI), which is a joint initiative of SANBI, DFFE and the DLRRD and is usually also supported by provincial or national biodiversity stewardship programmes.

It must be noted that the declaration of such land provides an array of opportunities for communities to benefit from their land and its protection. In many instances, this may simply involve securing existing land use, for example on land that is utilised for extensive livestock grazing, but this usually also involves opportunities to significantly benefit the communities and livestock owners involved through addressing land degradation, securing biodiversity and critical ecosystem functions, and improving animal production on the land. It also creates opportunities for sources of new and emerging innovative finance such as access to carbon markets and diversification of the use of the land to include wildlife components that complement livestock grazing activities. The creation of protected areas in this manner, provides a level of legal security for the land, which enables communities to leverage finance

and attract investment partners for activities such as tourism and opportunities such as game meat production and associated secondary activities.

8.3 DECLARATION OF PRIVATE LAND

The declaration of private land has been the primary mechanism for protected area expansion since the promulgation of NEMPAA. As highlighted in 3.2 above, the Business Case for Biodiversity Stewardship clearly demonstrates that this is the most efficient and cost-effective means of protected areas expansion both from the perspective of the cost to acquire land and the cost to manage the land once it has been declared as a protected area. The declaration of private land has encompassed multiple forms of protected areas, including national parks, nature reserves, protected environments and world heritage sites.

8.3.1 Protected area declaration process

The declaration of protected areas on private land has been undertaken since the 1950s and 1960s in terms of provincial legislation, leading to the establishment of private nature reserves in all provinces in the country. More recently, the declaration of protected areas on private land has been undertaken for over 20 years, in terms of NEMPAA since its promulgation,

MECHANISMS AND TOOLS FOR PROTECTED AREA EXPANSION

and there are now well understood and entrenched processes for undertaking protected area expansion in this way.

There are significant distinctions between protected area declaration processes undertaken through NEMPAA and those that were undertaken in establishing private nature reserves. Of most significance, declarations undertaken in terms of NEMPAA involve the assignment of a management authority, which in turn requires the preparation of a management plan, which must be approved by the minister or the MEC. This ensures a level of effective management of the protected area that was not provided in establishing private nature reserves.

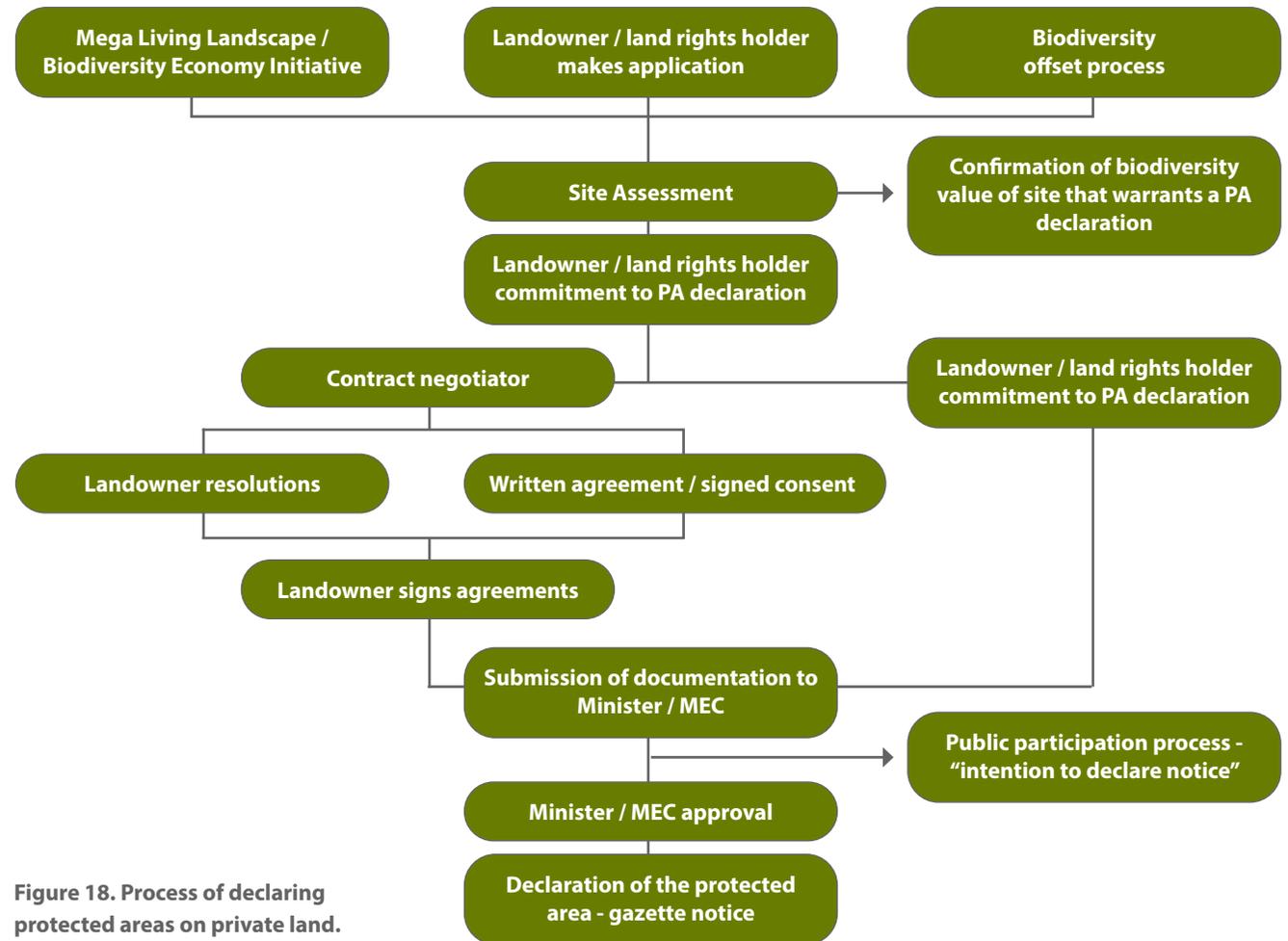


Figure 18. Process of declaring protected areas on private land.

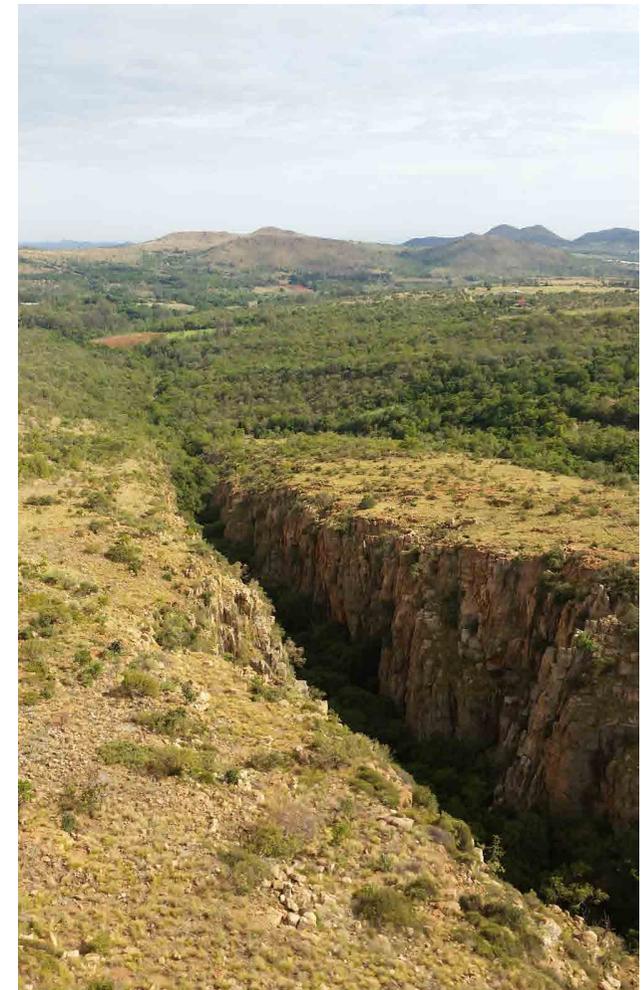


Many of the tools and processes that guide declarations on private land in terms of NEMPAA have been developed by the National Stewardship Technical Working Group and a sub-committee of it, the Legal Reference Group. Of most significance, the development of the Biodiversity Stewardship Guidelines (SANBI 2018) was prepared under the auspices of the working group with many of the practitioners in national and provincial programmes making inputs into it. The process of declaring a protected area on private land is conceptually depicted in Figure 18. It is important to highlight that most protected area declaration processes on private land require the voluntary commitment of the landowners involved. There is thus a need to understand the motivations of landowners in undertaking the declaration of their land and to design the protected area and its management plan in a way that responds to them.

In considering the declaration of protected areas on private land, the biodiversity value and land use should determine the type of protected area declared. Generally, national parks and nature reserves should be declared on land where the primary land use objective is biodiversity conservation, acknowledging that there are land use activities that are compatible with this including sustainable agriculture, tourism, recreational activities, hunting

and game meat production. In contrast, protected environments are intended primarily to secure existing land use and to ensure the maintenance of existing biodiversity and other ecological attributes. They provide a more flexible instrument that strikes a balance between biodiversity conservation and production from the land. Consequently, they have been successfully established across large landscape areas that are used for sustainable commercial agriculture.

The role of protected area declaration in support of land reform and restitution processes is an important consideration. There are good examples of the establishment of protected areas on land that has been redistributed or successfully land claimed by communities, which have led to significant benefits, usually linked to sustainable livestock-based agricultural initiatives or the wildlife economy. The declaration of such land is also a priority of the LRBSI and is usually also supported by provincial or national biodiversity stewardship programmes. Opportunities to undertake protected area declarations on such land should be actively explored and implemented, particularly in the context of the wildlife economy and the establishment of landscape-level initiatives such as mega living landscapes. Many such reserves start up as private game ranches which are registered with the province.



MECHANISMS AND TOOLS FOR PROTECTED AREA EXPANSION

8.3.2 Biodiversity offsets

Biodiversity offsets are conservation actions that compensate for the loss of biodiversity caused by a development activity. In South Africa, biodiversity offsets are applied as a last resort after a mitigation hierarchy has been applied in which efforts have been made to avoid, minimise and mitigate environmental impacts. Biodiversity offsets are intended to apply to the residual impact remaining once this mitigation hierarchy has been applied.

Multiplying factors are applied based on the sensitivity of the species, ecosystems and biodiversity involved, meaning that the area of land that must be protected will be orders of magnitude larger if the area affected is a CBA, is within a threatened ecosystem type and/or impacts on a threatened species. In South Africa, biodiversity offsets are required for the full duration of the associated development activity. While this can be permanent, offsets are typically applied for periods for approximately 35 years. The primary means of securing biodiversity offsets is through protected area declarations. These provide in perpetuity legal protection to the area earmarked as a biodiversity offset and provide the means to ensure that the biodiversity offset is effectively managed through the assignment of a management authority and the formal approval of a management plan, prepared in terms of NEMPAA.

Biodiversity offsets in The NW appear to have had limited success and have not worked effectively. Challenges include a prolonged process to establish and secure an offset, which suggests that timeframes need to be set if they are to be effective. Some offsets that have worked are linked to mining developments in the province with the addition of 7,000 hectares to Bloemhof Dam Nature Reserve, linked to diamond mining on the Bamboespruit River being an example.

Biodiversity offsets have the potential to be an effective means of undertaking protected area expansion and should be considered strategically through the identification of offset receiving areas in which existing protected areas can be consolidated, expanded or joined together rather than creating numerous small, protected areas with limited ecological value.

The identification of offset receiving areas may also assist in addressing some of the time delays in establishing offsets if areas suitable for protected area declaration are identified strategically, allowing for consolidated protected area expansion in a priority region.

8.3.3 Incentives for protected area expansion on private land

Several incentives have been developed for landowners to undertake the declaration of protected areas on their land. A principal incentive comes from the legal protection provided by a protected area declaration and the security that it provides for the existing land use, which may entrench such activities as those linked to sustainable livestock agriculture and those linked to the wildlife economy. Linked to this, the extension support provided to landowners, by the conservation authorities and NGO partners, to enable them to manage their protected areas effectively is often viewed as invaluable.

This is particularly true in the case of protected areas declared on communal land such as land restitution and reform sites, where the community beneficiaries require technical extension support in various components of the management of the protected areas and the businesses associated with them.

Examples of this have been seen where such sites have had agricultural certification schemes applied (e.g., the application of Responsible Wool Standard), where the landowners seek to obtain carbon finance through the generation of carbon credits and where there are business operations such as tourism activities being undertaken within



the protected areas. Protected areas also provide marketing advantages to landowners for tourism related activities and others such as those linked to the wildlife economy.

In addition to these incentives, there are several financial and fiscal benefits that have been developed in South Africa, including:

- ▶ Impermissible property rates provided in terms of Section 17(1)(e) of the Municipal Property Rates Act, 2004 (Act No. 6 of 2004), which states that a municipality may not levy a rate on those parts of a special nature reserve, national park or nature reserve within the meaning of NEMPAA, which are not developed or used for commercial, business, agriculture or residential purposes. In practice this means that the built infrastructure within the protected area remains subject to municipal property rates, but the natural areas may not then have municipal property rates levied upon them.
- ▶ Fiscal benefits provided in terms of section 37D of the Income Tax Act, 1962 (Act No. 58 of 1962), which enables a landowner to deduct 4% of the value of the land declared as a national park or nature reserve from their taxable income each year for 25 years. The value of the land is based on the higher of its municipal or market value, or the value based on a prescribed formula.

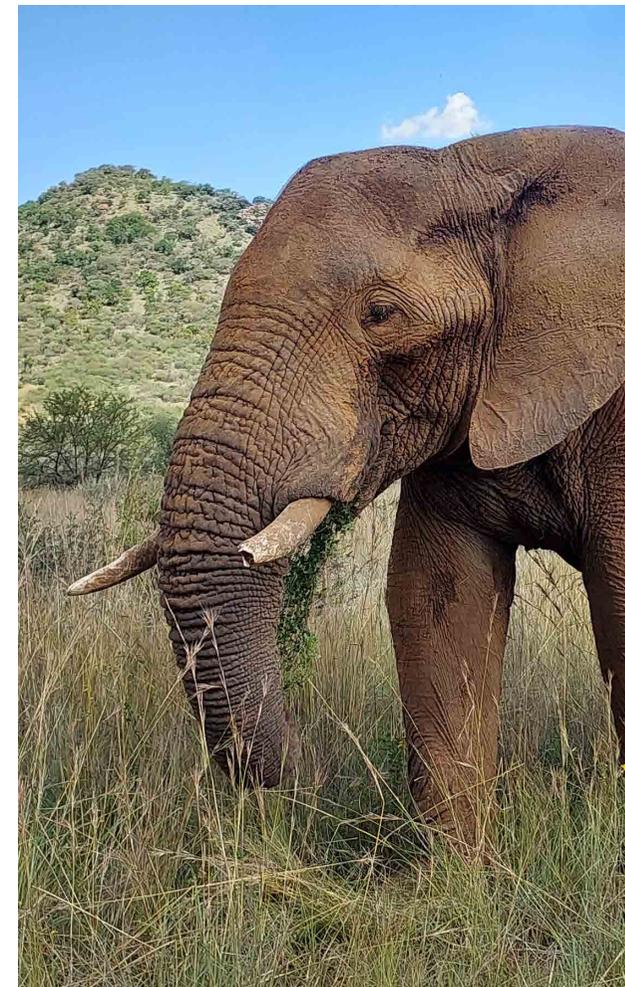
This latter incentive has to date not been fully appreciated in the province.

Other new financial and fiscal benefits are being developed in support of protected area declarations.

8.4 DEVELOPMENT OF AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

Protected area expansion should largely be driven by spatial priorities. These priorities are provided in the protected area expansion priority layers, which in turn have been identified using key informants such as the presence of CBAs. In the NW, the intention is to develop an Environmental Management Framework (EMF) per district municipality, which will be informed by the biodiversity sector plan.

This will in turn inform other local government planning tools such as spatial development frameworks (SDFs). These tools should embed protected area expansion imperatives in provincial, district and local planning instruments, enabling awareness to be raised about the spatial priorities for securing critically important biodiversity and ecological infrastructure. In parallel, awareness should also be raised about the role that protected areas may play in supporting and enabling rural



MECHANISMS AND TOOLS FOR PROTECTED AREA EXPANSION

economic development, and in providing jobs and business opportunities to local communities.

In developing the capacity to undertake protected area expansion in the NW, in accordance with the requirements of NEMPAA, a well-defined protected area declaration process is required, and this should be benchmarked with other provinces. Furthermore, the ongoing work of the National Biodiversity Stewardship Technical Working Group and the Legal Reference Group, provide access to a community of practice that collaborates on joint technical issues and develops new tools and procedures to improve and streamline the protected area declaration process.

It is essential that the NW is represented in these forums and contributes towards the thinking and approaches developed through them. The development of a well-defined protected area declaration process will encourage the conservation NGO sector to become more active in supporting protected area expansion in The NW. NGO funding is highly reliant on the ability to deliver results for funders, which in the case of protected area expansion, requires a level of certainty about the process and the ability to secure protected areas within reasonable timeframes. If such certainty is provided, this will encourage NGOs to seek funding

to support protected area expansion efforts in the province.

As much as protected area expansion should be driven by fine scale priorities to secure critically important biodiversity and achieve protected area targets, there is a need to consider landscape-level initiatives within the NW, acknowledging that all protected area expansion may not necessarily be purely target driven. The development of biodiversity economy nodes or mega living conservation landscapes, as they are now referred to in the draft NBES, aligned with the aspirations of SANParks Vision 2040, provides a conceptual framework for the establishment of large landscape level initiatives that encompass a suite of protected areas, OECMs and layers of compatible land use. These areas have considerable potential to drive sustainable rural economic growth and development and can allow for the re-establishment and maintenance of ecological processes and functions at large scales, which would include enabling the movement of large mammals and other iconic species that are key ecological indicators of the ecological integrity and resilience of natural systems at landscape-level scales.

Various initiatives exist to promote the establishment of Transfrontier Conservation Areas (TFCAs) between the North West Province and Botswana. While the Molopo Nature Reserve presents a clear opportunity for such collaboration, there are likely several other prospects for cross-border conservation initiatives that could strengthen ecological networks and foster regional cooperation.



**INDICATIVE COSTS TO
IMPLEMENT PROTECTED AREA
EXPANSION**



INDICATIVE COSTS TO IMPLEMENT PROTECTED AREA EXPANSION



Considerable work has been undertaken on the needs to finance protected area expansion in South Africa. Notably, the UNDP BIOFIN Programme has assisted the DFFE in developing a project focussed on the needs to support and expand the role of biodiversity stewardship in South Africa. Given that it is accepted that the vast majority of protected area expansion that has been undertaken in South Africa over the last 20 years has been through biodiversity stewardship and that land acquisition through purchase should be viewed as a limited strategic tool to be utilised in specific circumstances to achieve set outcomes, the focus for protected area expansion in the NW should be on the implementation of a biodiversity stewardship programme. Biodiversity stewardship is the mechanism by which state-owned communal land and private land can be

declared as protected areas and it provides the tools for the declaration of biodiversity offsets.

In many provinces in which biodiversity stewardship is being implemented as the primary mechanism for protected area expansion, the role of conservation authorities and MECs is to enable the protected area declaration process with many conservation NGOs providing resources and support in undertaking protected area declarations. Consequently, the resource needs of government in implementing biodiversity stewardship should be focussed on coordinating protected area expansion efforts and providing an enabling environment for protected area declarations.

In terms of personnel, the implementation of a biodiversity stewardship programme would ideally require a unit that would be placed within the NWPTB that would consist of the following personnel:

- ▶ A programme manager or coordinator, responsible for coordinating protected area expansion efforts in The NW and enabling the protected area declaration process through the office of the MEC.
- ▶ Administrative support to the programme.
- ▶ One or more biodiversity stewardship officers, ideally one to focus on communal land and one to focus on privately-owned land.
- ▶ Scientific support (particularly ecological support) required for the provision of technical expertise for:
 - Site assessments.
 - Development and implementation of management plans.
 - Monitoring, evaluation and reporting on the implementation of management plans and operational management plans.
 - Post-declaration technical support.
 - Support for specialist studies such as wildlife censuses and rangeland condition assessments, undertaken in protected areas in which livestock grazing is to be undertaken.



In addition to the human resources costs, there would be costs associated with logistics and operations. The types of costs that need to be considered include:

- ▶ The operational and administrative requirements for the project team, including the provision of computers, IT support, communications, and other administrative costs associated with operating offices for the project team.
- ▶ Transport costs related to the need to travel to meetings, to meet with landowners and community members and to undertake site visits to areas that have been declared or are in the process of being declared.
- ▶ Project promotional and marketing costs associated with the development of promotional materials in support of the programme and the provision of staff uniforms for the project team.
- ▶ The administrative costs of undertaking protected area declarations, including the costs to publish government gazette notices, newspaper advertisements and to hold stakeholder meetings and other events.

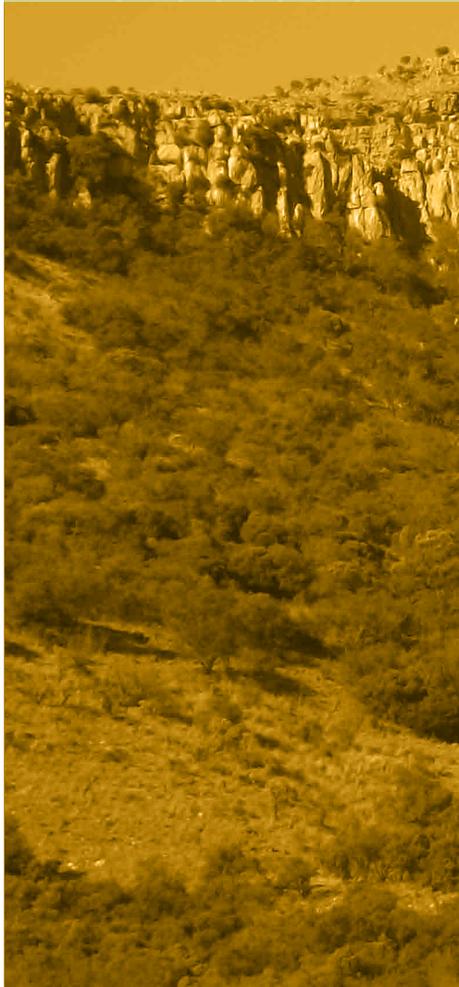
In addition to this, external technical support, which may be provided by NGO partners, would be required to facilitate the protected area declaration process and the provision of ongoing support once protected areas are declared:

- ▶ Technical declaration support, providing oversight and guidance in:
 - The planning, prioritisation and due diligence required for a site.
 - The preparation of protected area management plans.
 - ▶ The declaration process and the preparation of supporting declaration documents.
- ▶ Legal support, required for:
 - The preparation and review of written agreements required for the declaration of private land.
 - Associated document (e.g. landowner resolutions, special powers of attorney, etc.) preparation and review.

- Notary support and the completion of the title deed endorsement processes.
- Legal advice on the process and requirements necessary to declare state owned land assigned to a traditional authority.
- Other legal matters that may need to be addressed (e.g. property rates exemptions).
- ▶ Business planning:
 - Focussed particularly on the assessment of the feasibility of business ventures and leveraging of funding for economic development opportunities on communal land.
 - ▶ Exploring opportunities to provide innovative benefits and incentives to landowners and communities (e.g. through the certification and marketing of biodiversity friendly wildlife and agricultural products).

In the case of biodiversity offsets, the full cost for the declaration of the protected area and for its ongoing management, in accordance with the environmental authorisation for a development, must be borne by the development's proponent.

10



**NW PAES 2025-2030
IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**



10.1 CHALLENGES IN UNDERTAKING PROTECTED AREA EXPANSION IN NORTH WEST

The 2011 North West Protected Area Expansion Strategy (2011-2034) included five- and 20-year targets and spatial priorities for protected area expansion. The 20-year target that was set was 990,543 ha, which means adding an additional 788,174 ha of legally declared protected areas to the province. The targets were disaggregated between the grassland and savanna biomes of the province (Table 13).

Table 13. The 5- and 20-year targets set in the 2011 North West PAES.

Biome	Proportion of province	Area currently under conservation	Area required to achieve 5-year target (0.4%)	5-year target (ha) (2.3%)	20-year target (ha) (9.3%)
Grassland	30.1%	64 392 ha	9 344 ha	73 737 ha	371 890 ha
Savanna	69.9%	137 977 ha	33 260 ha	171 236 ha	863 626 ha
Total	100%	202 369 ha	42 604 ha	244 973 ha	990 543 ha

In the period since the development of the 2011 North West PAES, five nature reserves and two protected environments have been declared, covering a total area of 27 206 ha, which constitutes the achievement of 11.1% of the 5-year target and 2.7% of the 20-year target. The primary mechanism for protected area expansion identified in the 2011 North West PAES was the development of a biodiversity stewardship programme and land acquisition, where possible.

Several key challenges in achieving the targets set in the 2011 North West PAES have been identified and include:

- ▶ Political will, awareness and communication:
 - A lack of understanding of the fundamental role of protected areas in supporting human livelihoods and wellbeing, and being foundational to programmes like the biodiversity economy has meant that protected area declarations are often not given the priority that they deserve. This has resulted in a lack of progress in establishing and declaring protected areas, particularly when there

are perceived competing interests such as mining.

- ▶ Capacity issues:
 - There are challenges related to both funding and human resource needs linked to undertaking protected area expansion. Insufficient resources mean that there has not been the ability to scale-up protected area expansion efforts using the biodiversity stewardship approach and there is little or no funding for land acquisition.
 - Undertaking protected area expansion efforts involves complex declaration

processes that require close engagement with landowners and land rights holders and include complicated legal processes. These require staff that are skilled and experienced in these processes and dedicated legal support to deal with complexities and sensitivities that affect land ownership rights and land use.

- There is a lack of active involvement of NGOs in protected area expansion efforts in North West that occurs in other provinces. The activities of NGOs in other provinces contributes meaningfully to the provision of additional resources and capacity to undertake protected area expansion.
- ▶ Procedural issues:
 - ▶ In accordance with NEMPAA the Minister or the MEC in a province is mandated with the responsibility to undertake protected area declarations and this mandate cannot be delegated to an official within a department or other entity. Given that MECs often hold multiple mandates (e.g., economic development and tourism) the complexities and responsibilities linked to protected area declarations create challenges for political heads who have multiple responsibilities to fulfil. This

has led to significant delays in protected area declaration processes often linked to confusion about the process and the responsibilities set out in NEMPAA. Such delays can undermine protected area declaration processes and the commitment of landowners and land rights holders to them.

- ▶ Post-declaration issues:
 - Section 38(2)(a) of NEMPAA requires the MEC to assign a management authority of a nature reserve to a suitable entity. Section 38(2)(b) states that the MEC may assign a management authority to a protected environment. In terms of best practice, it is always preferable to have a management authority assigned, as the management authority must manage the area exclusively for the purpose for which it was declared and in accordance with NEMPAA and other applicable legislation. The assignment of a management authority is essential to prevent a protected area from becoming a nominal or legally declared area without practical implementation, as it ensures that a designated entity is held accountable for its management.
 - In accordance with Section 39 of the National Environmental Management:

Protected Areas Act (NEMPAA), the assigned management authority must submit a management plan to the MEC for approval within 12 months of assignment. This requirement is a critical step toward ensuring that a protected area is effectively managed, as the management plan serves as the foundation for guiding conservation actions and operational decision-making. It is therefore vital that all declared protected areas—particularly those on private or communal land—have formally assigned management authorities and approved management plans in place to ensure accountability, implementation, and long-term effectiveness.

It is important in undertaking the implementation of this revised North West PAES, the challenges highlighted above are acknowledged and measures to address them are adopted.

10.2 NW PAES 2025-2030 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The NW PAES 2025-2030 implementation plan is organised around eight (8) high-level outcomes (Table 14):

- ▶ Outcome 1: Existing protected areas in the NW



comply with the provisions of NEMPAA

- ▶ Outcome 2: Protected area targets consistent with the ambitions enunciated in relevant national policies but realistic to the NW's context are adopted
- ▶ Outcome 3: Protected area expansion efforts are focussed on priority areas, aligned with the NW's Biodiversity Sector Plan and other key informants
- ▶ Outcome 4: Landscape-level conservation initiatives, aligned with the Provincial and National Biodiversity Economy Strategy, are identified and implemented in the NW
- ▶ Outcome 5: Protected area expansion mechanisms, appropriate to the NW are developed and implemented in consolidating and expanding the protected area system
- ▶ Outcome 6: An enabling environment for protected area expansion is provided in the NW
- ▶ Outcome 7: An approach that is consistent with protected area expansion efforts in other provinces and nationally is adopted within the NW
- ▶ Outcome 8: Monitoring, oversight and reporting is instituted to enable the effective implementation of the North West PAES

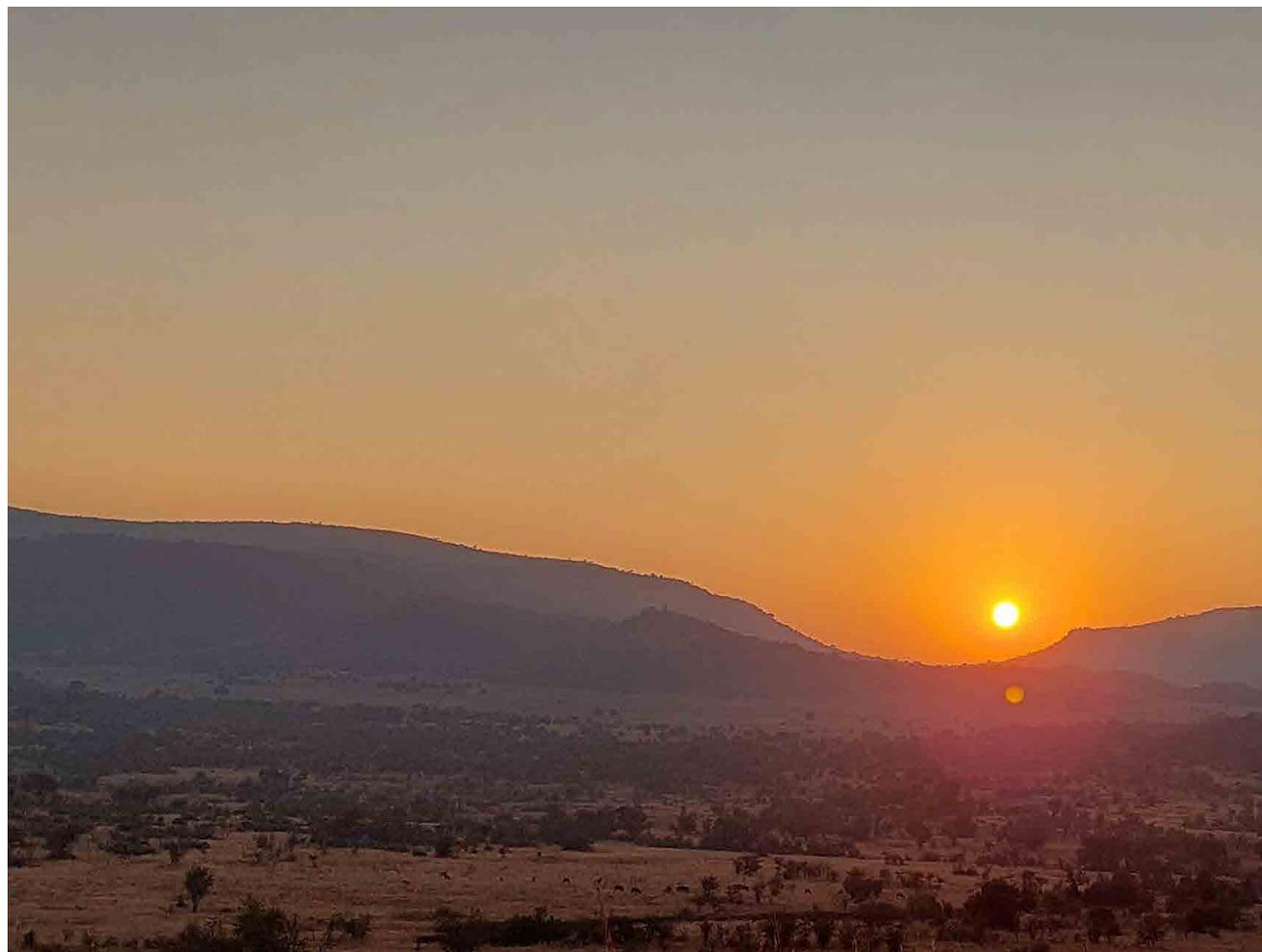


Table 14. The NW PAES 2025-2030 implementation plan.

Actions	Source of Action	Targets	Indicators	Lead	Supporting	Priority level	Resources needed	Start	Finish
Outcome 1: Existing protected areas in The NW comply with the provisions of NEMPAA									
Undertake a remote sensing audit of all private nature reserves in the NW to determine land use cover and land use change.	Norms and Standards for the Inclusion of Private Nature Reserves in the Register or Protected Areas of South Africa	100% of private nature reserves	Number of private nature reserves	DEDECT	NWPTB, DLRRD, DARD	High	Resources (Budget & Human)	2025	2028
Implement a process of verification and validation, as required in terms of the Norms and Standards for the Inclusion of Private Nature Reserves in the Register of Protected Areas of South Africa.	Reserves in the Register or Protected Areas of South Africa	100% of private nature reserves	Number of private nature reserves	DEDECT	NWPTB, DLRRD, DARD	High	Resources (Budget & Human)	2025	2028
Undertake an audit of provincial and municipal protected areas to determine declaration status and ensure that all protected areas are appropriately legally declared and protected, and compliant with NEMPAA.	NEMPAA 2003	100% of state-managed PAs	Number of state-managed PAs	NWPTB	DEDECT	Medium	Resources (Budget & Human)	2027	2028
Update the North West protected area system layer once private nature reserves have been regularised in terms of NEMPAA or have been de-proclaimed if their biodiversity attributes have been found to be compromised.	Register of Protected Areas of South Africa	100% of declared PAs compliant with NEMPAA	Number of PAs	DEDECT	NWPTB, DFFE	High	Resources (Budget & Human)	2025	2030



Actions	Source of Action	Targets	Indicators	Lead	Supporting	Priority level	Resources needed	Start	Finish
Outcome 2: Protected area targets consistent with the ambition stated in relevant national policies but realistic to the NW's context are adopted									
Adopt protected area targets for NW	NWPAES	29	Number of priority PA focus areas adopted in the PAES	DEDECT	NWPTB, DFFE, DLRRD, SANBI, Public Works, SANDF, CPAs	High	Resources (Budget & Human)	2025	2026
Protect under-represented and threatened veg types in the NW	BSP, NPAES, NWPAES, NBA	15%	Percentage of unrepresented & threatened veg types	DEDECT	SANBI	High	Resources (Budget & Human)	2025	2030
Annual protected area expansion targets are set for The NW through a consultative process between NWPTB, DEDECT and key partners such as conservation NGOs.	Annual Performance Plan (APP), BSP, NWPAES	Achievement of 25% (248 000 ha) of the 20-year target	Hectares of PAs declared	DEDECT, NWPTB	Municipalities, Biospheres, NGOs	High	Resources (Budget & Human)	2025	2030
Implement OECMs Norms and Standards for the Conservation Estate in NW Province.	Norms and Standards for OECMs	Provincial audit done against OECM norms and standards	Number of OECM audits conducted	DEDECT	NWPTB, Municipalities, Biospheres, NGOs	High	Resources (Budget & Human)	2025	2030

Outcome 3: Protected area expansion efforts are focussed on priority areas, aligned with the NW's Biodiversity Sector Plan and other key informants

In assessing prospective protected areas, utilise relevant tools such as spatial priorities for protected area expansion, CBA layers, and other informants including intact land cover, threatened ecosystems, species inventories and other relevant tools and data.	Norms and Standards for the Management of PAs in South Africa	Assessment of all prospective PAs	Number of assessments completed	DEDECT	NWPTB, DLRRD, DARD, SANParks, SANBI, DFFE, COGTA, Municipalities	High	Resources (Budget & Human)	2025	2030
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Actions	Source of Action	Targets	Indicators	Lead	Supporting	Priority level	Resources needed	Start	Finish
Outcome 4: Landscape-level conservation initiatives, aligned with the Provincial and National Biodiversity Economy Strategy, are identified and implemented in the NW									
Areas suitable for large landscape-level conservation initiatives, encompassing opportunities linked to the wildlife economy, sustainable rangeland management and the restoration economy are identified.	NBES, BSP, NPAES, NWPAES	Four mega living landscapes identified and mapped	Number of Mega Living Landscapes Identified and mapped	DEDECT	NWPTB, DLRRD, DARD, SANParks, SANBI, DFFE, COGTA, Municipalities	High	Resources (Budget & Human)	2025	2027
Funding opportunities for landscape level initiatives are collectively sought by partners, role players and stakeholders for the establishment and development of feasible landscape-level initiatives.	NBES, BSP, NPAES, NWPAES	Establishment of one or more projects supported by NGO partners and the private sector	Grant or other funding secured	NWPTB	DEDECT, DLRRD, DARD, SANParks, SANBI, DFFE, COGTA, Municipalities	Medium	Partner funding (NGO and private sector)	2027	2030
Together with landowners, land rights holders, NGO partners, government and private sector role players, feasible projects are evaluated and implemented.			Number of Mega Living landscape initiatives or projects implemented	NWPTB	DEDECT, DLRRD, DARD, SANParks, SANBI, DFFE, COGTA, Municipalities	Medium	Partner funding (NGO and private sector)	2027	2030



Actions	Source of Action	Targets	Indicators	Lead	Supporting	Priority level	Resources needed	Start	Finish
Outcome 5: Outcome 5: Protected area expansion mechanisms, appropriate to the NW are developed and implemented in consolidating and expanding the protected area system									
A biodiversity stewardship programme, involving NGO partners and other key role players, is developed and implemented in the NW.	Biodiversity Stewardship Programme	Adoption of one or more agreements by NGOs to support PA expansion in North West	Agreements (e.g., MOUs or MOAs)	NWPTB	DEDECT, DLRRD, DARD, SANParks, SANBI, DFFE, COGTA, Municipalities, Private Sector, NGOs	High	Partner funding (NGOs)	2025	2030
Strategically important areas, which allow for consolidation and expansion of existing protected areas, suitable as biodiversity offset receiving areas, are linked to large-scale development initiatives in the province.	Biodiversity Offset Policy and Guidelines, NWPAES, NWBSP, NPAES, Offset Agreements	Identify one or more biodiversity offset receiving areas within PAES spatial priorities	Number of biodiversity offset receiving areas mapped and delineated.	DEDECT	NWPTB, DFFE	Medium	Resources (Budget & Human) Goods & Services (GIS, software, computers)	2027	2030
An audit of state-owned land in the NW and the land uses on it is undertaken to identify strategically important land that may be incorporated into the protected area system.	NEMPAA, NWPAES, NWBSP, NPAES	Declaration of one or more protected areas on existing state-owned land	PAs established or expanded	DEDECT	NWPTB	High	Resources (Budget & Human)	2026	2030
Strategically important land parcels that address existing protected area design deficiencies and improve ecological connectivity are identified for land incorporation purposes.	PA Management Plans – Expansion Needs, NWPAES, NWBSP, NPAES	Identification of strategically important land parcels around existing PAs for incorporation	Number of land parcels identified for incorporation	NWPTB	DEDECT, DLRRD, DARD, SANParks, SANBI, DFFE, COGTA, Municipalities, Private Sector, NGOs	High	Resources (Budget & Human) Goods & Services (GIS, software, computers)	2026	2027

Actions	Source of Action	Targets	Indicators	Lead	Supporting	Priority level	Resources needed	Start	Finish
Outcome 6: An enabling environment for protected area expansion is provided in the NW									
Institutional capacity for protected area expansion in the North West Province is strengthened through the establishment of dedicated positions, and the integration of protected area expansion functions into the job descriptions and performance management frameworks of relevant existing personnel	Environmental sector budget structure, NEMPAA, NEMBA, NWPTB Act, DEDECT and NWPTB Organisational Structure, NWPAES	Biodiversity stewardship unit and PA expansion functions embedded within NWPTB and DEDECT	Staff and performance criteria	NWPTB, DEDECT		High	Resources (Budget & Human) Goods & Services (GIS, software, computers)	2025	2026
Processes and institutional arrangements, including the establishment of relevant committees and other forums, are adopted to enable a consistent, rigorous approach to protected area declarations.	NEMPAA, Biodiversity Stewardship Guideline	1. Develop and implement SOPs for declaration of PAs 2. Establish a provincial PA Technical Committee	1. Number SOPs developed 2. Number of meetings held	DEDECT	NWPTB, DLRRD, DARD, SANBI, DFFE, COGTA, Municipalities	High	Resources (Budget & Human)	2025	2027
Standardised tools, aligned with national and provincial best practices, are developed and adopted to support consistent site assessments, agreements, management plans, and gazetting processes in the North West.	Biodiversity Stewardship Technical Working Group	Adoption of standardised tools and processes for the effective management of PAs	Number of standardised tools developed	DEDECT	NWPTB	High	Resources (Budget & Human)	2026	2030



Actions	Source of Action	Targets	Indicators	Lead	Supporting	Priority level	Resources needed	Start	Finish
Outcome 7: An approach that is consistent with protected area expansion efforts in other provinces and nationally is adopted within the NW									
The North West actively participates in national platforms for protected area management.	Biodiversity Stewardship Technical Working Group, Legal Reference Group, Working Group 1, PA Technical Task team	Attendance as per meeting schedules	Number of meetings attended	DEDECT	NWPTB	High	Budget for attendance of national meetings	2025	2030
Outcome 8: Monitoring, oversight and reporting is instituted to enable the effective implementation of the North West PAES									
Establish processes that provide post-declaration support for protected areas on private and communal land, including mechanisms for oversight, monitoring, and reporting.	Regulations for the Proper Administration of Nature Reserves 2012, National Biodiversity Stewardship Guideline 2018, NW PAES, METT	METT Assessments for PAs in NW	Number of METT assessments conducted	DEDECT	NWPTB	High	Resources (Budget & Human)	2025	2030



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A REPORT ON THE PROTECTED AREA EXPANSION STRATEGY

Protected areas are fundamental to effective biodiversity conservation and the maintenance of essential natural resources that society is reliant on for its well-being, livelihoods and survival. A system of protected areas plays an important role in ensuring landscape-level ecological integrity and resilience, which enables mitigation of and adaptation to environmental uncertainties associated with climate change and other impacts. A system of protected areas must be representative and be effectively secured and managed if biodiversity targets, determined through a systematic biodiversity planning approach, are to be met.



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"Leaders are those creative team players amongst us who are persevering, strategic, and maintain a desire to be continual learners." - Germany Kent

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ONE BEHIND**