

Reaching Target 3 of the Global Biodiversity Framework

Securing sufficient, representative area through Protected Areas and other effective mechanisms to meet commitments under the Global Biodiversity Framework.

Workshop discussion document to support the Agenda of 6 – 8 June 2023

The purpose of this discussion document is to provide essential reading in preparation for the upcoming workshop, including access to resources you may want to re-visit to guide your thinking on the day.

“Ensure and enable that by 2030 at least 30 per cent 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, recognizing indigenous and traditional territories, where applicable, and integrated into wider landscapes, seascapes and the ocean, while ensuring that any sustainable use, where appropriate in such areas, is fully consistent with conservation outcomes, recognizing and respecting the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, including over their traditional territories.”

1. Context

South Africa has committed to the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF - Kunming-Montreal Protocol). Indications are that GBF Target 3 (protecting 30% by 2030) is identified as the apex goal informing South Africa’s response to the GBF, around which many others can be developed. A planning process is underway to develop a suitable GBF country implementation plan that is aligned with and supportive of mobilizing finance and commitment towards achieving and expanding existing biodiversity frameworks and targets in South Africa. This workshop initiates the deeper discussions on Target 3 – which is being pursued to give greater substance, clarity, and ambition to the implementation plan for contributing significantly and meaningfully to the 30x30 global agenda.

This document aims to provide a succinct overview of some of the pertinent issues informing an effective response to Target 3 and key questions to set the stage for the discussions at the Workshop.

Current protection levels have been analysed in some detail and South Africa reached 9.2% by 2020. This frames the departure point for plans to reach GBF-levels of ambition for protection of biodiversity. In November 2020 Cabinet approved the 2018 NPAES for implementation. This was current to 2014 data, provided an update on the 2008 spatial priorities for expansion and committed the country to 17% (terrestrial) and 10% (marine) expansion targets respectively (with variable targets for different ecosystem types). The NPAES is currently not in synch with significant contribution to a 30x30 agenda, which requires increased pace and spatial ambition. In addition to identifying immediate short-term actions, and a plan for implementing 30x30, workshop outcomes will provide a basis for revision of the NPAES so that it better aligns with Target 3.

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The White Paper on Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use was approved by Cabinet in April 2023. Goal 1 enjoins South Africa to pursue conservation of the full diversity of nature, especially in a way that provides services and underpins livelihoods. Biodiversity stewardship mechanisms aligned with this goal are well articulated in a national Guideline which sets out categories of protection and stewardship approaches (see Figure 2). Increasing protection is likely to demand innovative models and management that prioritize a mosaic approach to priority landscapes that successfully incorporate Category 1 and 2 protection measures as a key feature not only of biodiversity conservation, but also climate adaptation and mitigation as well as sustainable ecological rural development – for which national strategies already exist. The White Paper also provides some cautionary analysis of the political, governance and fiscal challenges and identifies key results areas to remove obstacles to protection.

March 2023 saw the launch of SANParks 2040 Vision at the highest political level. This is an exciting reimagining of National Parks and conservation as a foundation and catalyst for future economic development and is a beacon to build towards through the “Mega Conservation Landscapes” approach. Moreover, the Just Transition Framework for South Africa highlights the key role (and policy focus area) that expanding protected areas, green economy work, and restoring vital ecosystem services will play in reskilling and providing new employment opportunities for vulnerable sectors of the work force that is aligned with biodiversity stewardship mechanisms and related economic opportunities.

Accepting Target 3 as the apex goal informing South Africa’s response, it is crucial that we heed the GBF caution that it is not just bland area that contributes – areas must be representative, effectively protected, conserved, and managed, through mechanisms that are well governed, sustainable, inclusive, and that deliver services. This must explicitly guide any Implementation Plan. It is therefore necessary to carefully examine each candidate mechanism to be counted towards achievement of 30x30 against criteria to ensure that all mechanisms included qualify as bone fide in terms of the GBF criteria.

South Africa now enjoys the highest-level commitment and an increased level of ambition towards improving the protection of nature. South Africa also has a well-developed and nuanced set of biodiversity policies and frameworks that provide for the full spectrum of biodiversity stewardship mechanisms. More ambitious biodiversity protection is vital for multiple reasons, not least building the foundation of the biodiversity economy, adapting to climate change, safeguarding key water sources, and mitigating ecologically mediated risks.

Prior strategies for protected area expansion have been published but progress with implementation remains well below targets set. **What is now required is to – across sectors - draw in a broad base of actors, develop a collaborative vision, consolidate existing plans, and honestly appraise obstacles and challenges and emerge with a collective implementation plan.** The opportunity presented by Target 3 to include diverse stakeholders and biodiversity stewardship mechanisms is also an opportunity to attract new, innovative finance mechanisms and speed up society-wide commitment to support greater conservation efforts.

Significant coordination capacity is required post the workshop to give effect to this plan – especially to coordinate efforts and resourcing with the other GBF targets. If successful, SA could formulate a plan with greater chances of yielding the desired outcome of realising the vision of PAs as a catalyst and vehicle for economic development.

2. Examining historical slow progress & challenges

There are many obstacles to expanding effective protection (opportunities are highlighted in Section 7). Some are set out in the White Paper, but many others emerge only at a granular level or are political sensitive, or poorly understood and underexplored. Any implementation plan must be cognizant of these obstacles and devise appropriate responses with the right dose of urgency and ambition. Some key issues follow:

Limited vision for large scale conservation using a mosaic of biodiversity stewardship mechanisms and the full range of actors (i.e not just government led initiatives) has hampered the speed and financial viability of ambitious conservation activities. A new vision for biodiversity protection that includes the full spectrum of biodiversity stewardship mechanisms, stakeholders and landowners is essential for reaching the 30% protection goal.

Political will is clearly stated at a national level, but the will to declare (or support declaration of) Category 1 protected areas is lacking in some instances. As a result, in some cases, legal action has been used as a last resort to advance protection – further escalating conflicts and delaying the implementation of biodiversity stewardship mechanisms. Understanding the reasons around political reluctance or opposition to declare sites, and repeatedly making the case for improved protection are ongoing challenges for the sector.

Explanations for the lack of departmental and agency support for PA expansion include i) insufficient budget for current reserves, ii) no agreement on or buy-in to PA expansion performance metrics for MECs or agency top management, iii) no high- level decision on the mandate for and management responsibility over new PAs (e.g. in SWSAs), and iv) conflicting mandates in provincial environment departments also responsible for agriculture or economic development. In the marine realm, there are i) perceptions of historical legacies (exclusion, lack of benefits, disregarded customary rights); ii) lack of public acceptance to existing and opposition to new protection; and iii) perceptions that priorities now relate to ensuring management of 20 new MPAs, over further expansion.

Efforts are needed to better articulate or convey the co-benefits of biodiversity conservation for a range of stakeholders. Without a clear value proposition for the contribution of biodiversity conservation to local economic development strategies, expanded targets will continue to be seen as being in opposition to the broader economic growth agenda in South Africa

Administrative and bureaucratic obstacles hinder efficient declaration of protected areas. Different legal interpretations, overly cumbersome and unclear processes, staff turnover in key administrative posts and technical capacity limitations in many agencies have stalled protecting many hundreds of thousands of potential hectares. A large area of historical PAs is inadequately declared, leaving it vulnerable to applications for incompatible land uses and weak management. Resolving this will require coordinated technical support, a greater regulatory clarity of the declaration process, and perhaps even an outsourced capacitated unit to assist provinces resolve multiple declaration issues (see Section 7 for more).

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attempts to rezone parts of 3 southern Cape MPAs to stricter protection. Availability of resources for adequate staff, operating costs and equipment to effectively manage new MPAs is cited as an obstacle for new expansion. The appetite for and pace of expansion within the agencies responsible for the management and planning/science for marine protected areas, has not been at the level required to meet the ambitious GBF target over the past 5 years. Moreover, increased consultation, collaboration and sharing of information with civil society contributors and NGOs will be required, building on the [EBSA, Marine CBA](#) and the Atlantic processes and the inclusive task team on Marine OECMs (under Working Group 1).

Inadequate Budgets, Funds and Resourcing is hampering biodiversity conservation at scale. The South African government only allocates 0,6% of GDP to all environmental functions, and only 0,05% on activities linked to conserving nature. Further, the environment is the only concurrent competence under the Constitution that doesn't have a conditional grant framework, where provinces (or NGOs) are supported by the National fiscus to deliver national priorities and commitments. Provincial budgets understandably prioritise education, health, and transport – the main services of a developmental state. Provincial conservation entities are unlikely to compete successfully for sufficient budget against these sectors, even though they deliver indisputable benefits to society and the economy.

Budget prioritisation and operational focus of conservation agencies have not been on expansion (except perhaps SANParks). For example, Mpumalanga has three posts for PA expansion, but all are currently unfunded and unfilled. Northern Cape PA expansion posts are mostly donor supported. Apart from a few notable exceptions, most provincial entities have not expanded the PA estate under their auspices (NPAES 2018). Reasons include funding, capacity and management constraints, emphasis on revenue generation, and the tendency for centralisation and creating administrative posts in head offices, as opposed to investing in PA staff, stewardship and other protection and management effectiveness programmes.

Lack of tangible government support for working models of PA expansion is concerning. On land, Biodiversity Stewardship has delivered vastly more protection over the last decade than all other mechanisms combined. Yet there is no core DFFE fiscal support for stewardship programmes (in provincial agencies or NGOs), many provinces have no staff or no budget for stewardship posts, and most others are supported by NGOs or donor programs. This makes the key capacity to drive PA expansion exquisitely vulnerable to perennial 'restructuring' and changing donor whims. Without predictable, reliable government funds or a substantial endowment type arrangement, it is difficult to see how much progress can be made on target 3. There is a need to develop additional approaches to protected area expansion financing that draws on public-private partnerships, multi-lateral funding, and innovative conservation finance at the national, provincial, and municipal level to address the lack of financial resources to support expanded biodiversity conservation targets.

Furthermore, Business as Usual may even take us backward given the parlous state of many existing reserves and their infrastructure.

Land, sea, and resource use conflicts and competing interests have frustrated much PA expansion. Deficiencies in mineral and petroleum resource regulation and an overt assumption that mining/extraction trumps all other land and sea use rights, especially conservation, increases legal contestation and costs and impedes effective synergy.

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Perceived implications for food security (and jobs) due to reducing areas for fishing because of MPA expansion, has led to elements of the fishing sector insisting that PAs don't play a role in management of most commercially important stocks, that they simply lead to a transfer of focus and effort to other areas, and obfuscate stock assessments. The emergence of the small-scale fishing sector potentially introduces additional complexities in coastal areas especially because many of these communities assert that they have been denied and disadvantaged through MPAs.

The planned/anticipated growth of many sectors under Operation Phakisa and the Oceans Economy Master Plan increases the scope for conflict with ambitious protection targets but also creates opportunities for creating a clearer value proposition for marine conservation efforts and innovative conservation finance initiatives. Due to the decade of biodiversity assessment and systematic conservation planning preparation that the conservation sector enjoyed we had a head start on other Phakisa sectors who had not even begun to implement their objectives by the time of MPA declaration. These sectors have their own targets, and the planned development is extending to other sectors in terms of the Master Plan.

There have been times of successful conflict resolution and cooperation between competing sectors. But this requires leadership, technical proficiency in solution finding and clear governance – much as the Presidential Climate Commission is doing on climate change and the Just Energy Transition. Opportunities exist to address many of these challenges – and are elaborated on at the end of this note.

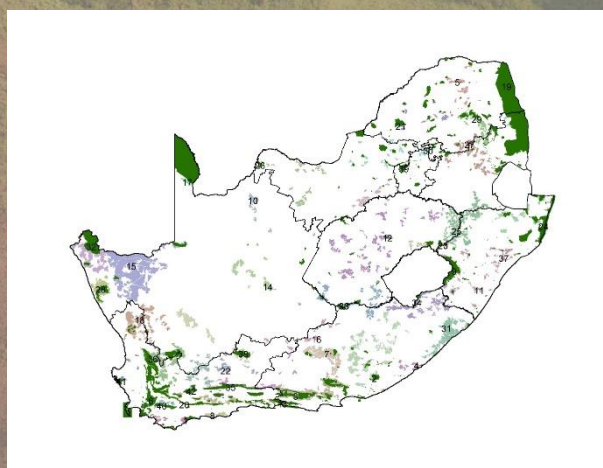
Key question: How does the environment sector best address these multiple challenges and obstacles, given the misconceptions that bedevil protection?

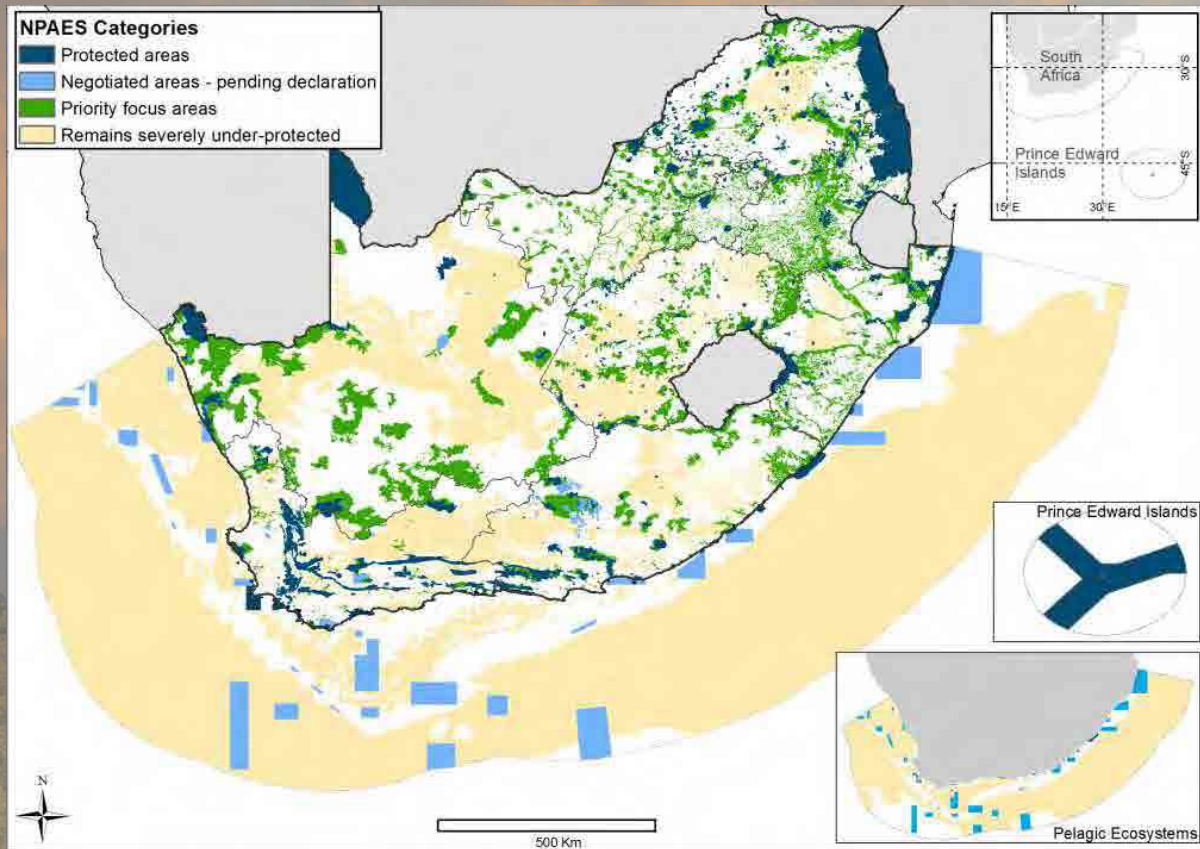
3. Spatial prioritisation

Expansion Plans in the terrestrial sphere have existed for two decades although are more recent for the ocean – the biodiversity planning sector has been open, transparent, and proactive. Some provinces have possibly been more thorough and creative than others and have had greater support to implement prior plans. Given that spatial priorities already exist, what is required is recalibrating existing plans to recognise greater ambition, recent progress with protection, emerging opportunities and avoidable land use conflicts,

Spatial biodiversity and ecological infrastructure information is not limiting – we have abundant data on the occurrences of biodiversity, freshwater priorities, water yield, climate risks, and priorities for protection and restoration to meet existing Policy targets in SA. How this prioritisation is promoted to other sectors, political principles, and ultimate decision makers is a long social process requiring great care and focus.

The 2008 PA expansion priorities.





The current 2018 NPAES reflects different approaches and objectives from each province, doesn't meet the 30x30 ambition and still leaves many areas and ecosystems severely unprotected.

Key question: How to balance the effort and investment in securing the last remnants of biodiverse ecosystems in the face of increasing land use pressures, vs possibly easier protection of the intact areas of extensive, drier, and less fertile ecosystems currently intact. We could easily meet with required targets in the latter areas, but deprive future generations of healthy catchments, many unprotected and unique ecosystems and habitats, and as full a complement of species as possible.

Deeper understanding of constraints and limitations arising from sectoral spatial plans are vital to inform efficient PA expansion that minimises land use conflicts but recognises the spatial requirements for 'ecological life support systems'. The roll out of renewable energy and supporting grid infrastructure poses threats and opportunities to expansion priorities which, if not actively engaged with, can otherwise side-line our response to 30 x 30. Conflict with mining and mineral potential is a perennial concern – exacerbated by the lack of a transparent cadastre of existing and potential mining leases and an adversarial approach from certain officials. Enquiring into mineral information is expensive, time consuming and often frustrating and unproductive. Effective cooperative governance between the Environment and Mineral Resource functions is imperative and needs senior political resolution.

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Key question: What minimum changes to current cooperative governance architecture are needed to best navigate the requirements of mineral and hydrocarbon development (within our current cap) and the maintenance of an environment that is not harmful to health and wellbeing, protected and in line with global commitment and local dependencies?

Synergies with many sectors, (mining, forestry, oil & gas, water, wildlife & ecotourism, fisheries, aquaculture and agriculture) are possible, but elusive and need greater resourcing, commitment, and leadership. Building on stewardship mechanisms, addressing current challenges whilst setting more ambitious targets for these areas is paramount.

4. Tools & mechanisms

Confusion reigns over terminology, approaches, and what counts – not just towards target 3 but to the ultimate goal of fulfilling the constitutional right to having the environment protected. Care must be taken to distinguish mechanisms applied to a parcel of land inferring protection and management implications, from designations that refer to values or are derived from international treaties or other commitments. These designations can overlay other protection mechanisms but do not in themselves necessarily constitute effective protection or management. There is a real risk of chasing targets using large area designations for the sake of reporting or avoiding embarrassment and leaving a legacy of unmanaged, deteriorating, or asset-stripped paper parks. This would be the ultimate self-deception for South Africa.

Protected Areas are relatively well-defined and include Marine Protected Areas, National Parks, Nature Reserves and Protected Environments. Adjacent designations (Mountain Catchment Areas, Forest Nature Reserves, Forest Wilderness Areas) require better integration into the formal scheme in NEMPAA through allocation of management responsibility, budget lines and management plans. World Heritage Sites can be formal and effective protection, but in the case of Cultural WHS these should not contribute to biodiversity targets if there is no other effective mechanism underlying this designation – however WHS not effectively protected only constitute 0,2% of SA.

Target 3 includes the use of **Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Mechanisms** (OECMs) which are required to be tested against a suite of criteria. This needs better analysis and deeper understanding in our context to settle on the most suitable mechanisms, but the data and preliminary checking against the criteria in SA shows that some measures are not effective (Figure 1). These include the buffer zones of Biosphere Reserves, conservancies, and game farms and their areas cannot count towards targets. Others – such as Biodiversity Management Agreements, Conservation Servitudes and Title Deed Restrictions - are showing promise, and could reliably be included in reporting on the GBF targets. The current formulation shows that 'Conservation Areas' (as per SACAD) are not a useful grouping to report contribution to targets and a more refined set is needed. Perhaps a OECM Database will be required to enable reporting to the CBD and GBF, as well as White Paper and MTSF commitments.

Conservation Areas defined by DFFE also include 'National Botanical Gardens' which can meet the criteria but are very difficult to scale in area. Ramsar Sites are also nominally included in SACAD, but only the portions of the wetlands that are formally protected anyway. **Important** – this definition of Conservation Areas is not the same as Category 2 'Conservation Areas' in the Stewardship Framework (see Figure 2). Going forward this note will use Category 2 to refer to the suite of non-NEMPAA conservation mechanisms that are showing promise and align with the OECM criteria (noting this is largely untested in the marine realm). **Key question:** can we justify the attention and focus on extensive designations of nominal protection (such as buffers of biosphere reserves) when interrogation has shown them to be ultimately unhelpful in achieving effective protection and management of biodiversity and are ineligible for target contribution – if this attention and effort detracts from existing effective mechanisms and agreements?

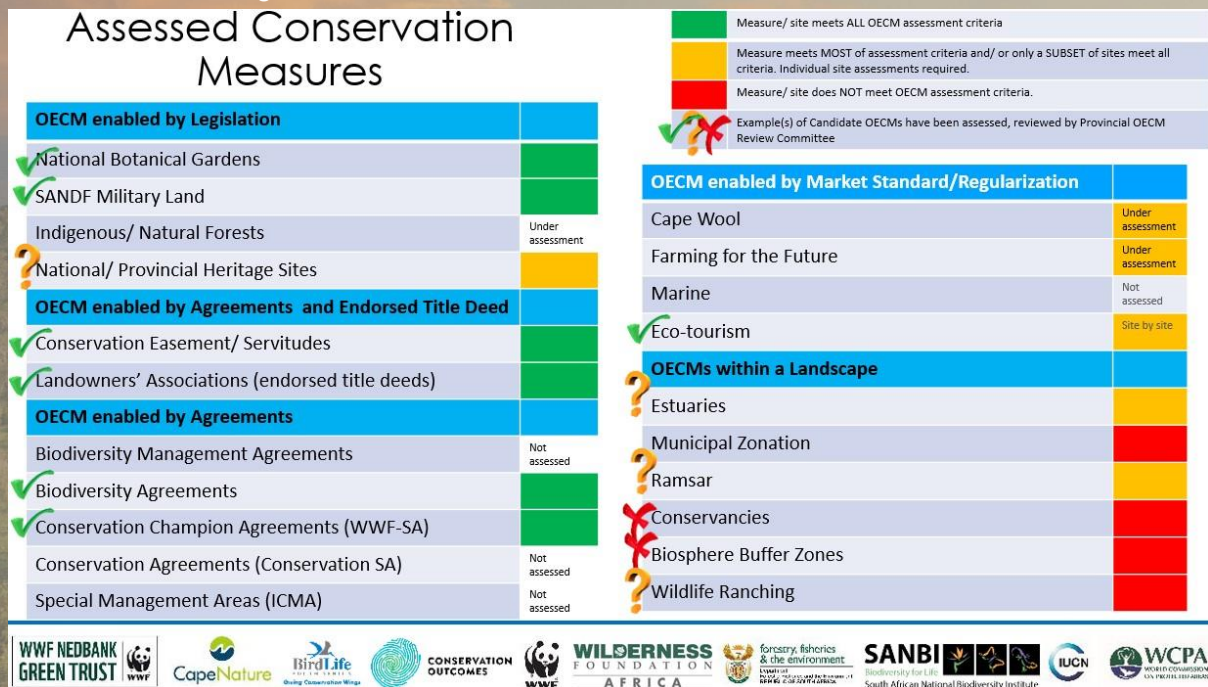


Figure 1. Initial assessment of Conservation measures against the OECM criteria (W Cape pilot).

A clear risk would be to use ineffectual mechanisms with little active management, no durable protections, and proliferating risks to nature just to artificially expand the appearance of our protected lands must be avoided at all costs.

In addition to formal Protected Areas and eligible Category 2 mechanisms, Target 3 and other targets in the GBF envisage ecologically functional Landscapes and seascapes that work for nature and people. SA is fortunate to have multiple examples of such conservation land- and seascapes, anchored by protected areas but thriving in a matrix of compatible land uses including mixed ranching, ecotourism, and game farms. Fertile and productive (and thus highly transformed) ecosystems require a different approach that protects remnants, water courses, disaster prone areas, and encourages restoration and greater linkages where prudent, and regulates land uses more effectively to reduce or remove threats to this biodiversity and ecological infrastructure.

Zoning tools, Biodiversity Management Agreements, industry certification and related measures require greater exploration in these landscapes.

Acquisition is prohibitively expensive and can be relied on only for very specific scenarios. There may be the need to secure key properties from incompatible developments, uncooperative landowners or to create corridors in last chance landscapes. However, voluntary, contractual models (and often accompanying incentives) will likely play the greatest role in reaching the targets, especially on communally managed and settled land, which aligns with the broad-based governance imperatives of the GBF.

5. MPAs and Estuarine issues

South Africa sought to implement an ecologically representative Marine Protected Area (MPA) network to achieve biodiversity and fisheries management goals with least impact on offshore stakeholders. The result was the declaration of a spatially efficient network representing 131 of 150 marine ecosystem types (87%) in 5.4% of ocean area.

It took a 15-year process of planning to implementation of 20 new MPAs, including contentious areas long recognized as important for conservation. Systematic Conservation Planning (SCP) supported by 532 data layers and an inclusive stakeholder process identified priority areas, reduced conflict, and guided complex trade-offs. Multiple scenarios and iterative improvements increased transparency, supported ocean zonation, and achieved balanced compromises while maintaining conservation objectives. Key challenges, enabling factors and lessons are that flexible, evidence-based SCP - together with adaptive social processes that are alert to opportunities - can support implementation of representative MPA networks aligned to ocean economy goals. Building on the extensive planning undertaken to date, there is a mature Critical Biodiversity Areas Map to guide prioritisation through a rapid systematic process to minimise conflict with other ocean space users, and to achieve an optimal marine protected area expansion plan with short-term and 30x30 targets. South Africa is facing the real potential for extinctions of some endangered species (penguins, sharks and rays), which targeted MPAs and other measures such as Fishery Management Areas that exclude damaging activities can address.

However, there remain issues of lack of compliance, lack of progress with addressing social impacts and historical injustices associated with MPAs. Support for financing marine conservation at scale across the full MPA network (existing and expanded) would allow many of these issues to be resolved, as there is willingness within government to investigate mechanisms for this and to seek partnership and support from civil society (corporate, private sector and NGOs).

Although a Biodiversity Plan (2011) and an Estuarine Management Protocol (2021) exist, estuarine protection and conservation is particularly challenging. Estuaries are among the most threatened ecosystems examined in the National Biodiversity Assessment. Overall, nearly 82% (19 out of 22 types) of South Africa's estuarine ecosystem types are under-protected. Only 18% of estuarine ecosystem types are Well Protected (4 types), while about 36% are Moderately Protected (8 types) and 32% are Poorly Protected (7 types). Most concerning, <1% of protected estuaries are "no-take" zones which are vital for maintaining many commercially and socially important fish populations.

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6. Funding and Resources

In many ways, sufficient and dependable funding is core to meet target 3. Much work has been done to explore the need and opportunities, but real progress has been slow. Global funds beckon but will only be truly effective if layered on top of improved government and local investments. There is a persistent impression that ecological infrastructure and biodiversity maintenance can and must pay for itself – despite it being the ultimate public good, and with demonstrable evidence of insufficient cost recovery by current conservation agencies.

State allocations to nature conservation are insufficient to meet current commitments and constitutional requirements – demonstrated by the BioFin Project's funding gap analysis. Investment is also not commensurate with the levels of ecologically-mediated risk and direct and economic costs imposed by poor natural resource management – graphically witnessed by wildfires (e.g. Knysna 2017), droughts (N, E and W Cape 2015-9) and floods (KZN 2022). Recall that roughly 0,05% of the state's budget goes to Nature. Substantially more is spent on dealing with the disasters, infrastructure loss, and other consequences that could have been avoided through improved catchment protection and management and proactive alien plant and fire control.

For MPAs, a nearly 10-fold increase in protected estate has been met with only a 1,5 fold increase in budget and no increase in staff numbers at head office. Where MPAs adjoin terrestrial reserves and are managed by the same authority, budget and resource allocation is typically highly skewed to the terrestrial component; the marine comparatively neglected.

Moreover, existing budgets are not efficiently deployed. Many provinces have operating budgets below 10% of total, with the bulk consumed by salaries. This is incompatible with both effective management. Reaching a substantially increased protection ambition will require greater allocation from National Treasury, a better balance of staff to operational costs, field staff to support staff, and more targeted spend on the officials/programs and NGOs focussed on expansion and post-declaration support. Historic attempts at rationalising PA management functions stalled. Improved revenue-generation from key ecosystem services – such as water provision - must accompany traditional income streams.

Key question; How, despite obvious but largely unmonetizable value, do we clearly bring the case for PAs, conserved landscapes and ecosystem services (and other forms of natural capital) into the budgeting and political prioritisation processes?

NGOs and civil society have funded substantial projects building capacity, developing the methodologies and protocols to improve protection and related mechanisms. In addition to direct land purchase, NGOs have played a key role in finding, nurturing, and equipping the human capital to support conservation outreach and protection. Although this contribution is invaluable (and will hopefully grow), current levels of support and donations are not going to be sufficient to reach anything near the current level of ambition.

Donors (included GEF, WWF, multi- and bilateral agreements, etc) have provided much of the core costs of various teams pursuing expansion, especially since 2003. Whether this will be maintained and grow in concert with the required level of ambition is unclear – even with the proposed Kunming Montreal Protocol financing provisions. Regardless, being most efficient with donor funds is critical to stretch them as far as possible and create a foundation to leverage more sustainable funding.

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Philanthropy could play an increasing role in meeting targets. Finding creative ways to recognise, incentivise or unlock greater contributions towards 30 x 30 deserves more dedicated resourcing. Explicitly aligning Target 3 objectives with multiple other concerns (Just Transition, Economic Development, Social Protection *inter alia*) is a useful stratagem.

An entire field is emerging on sustainable conservation finance, private investment in nature and project finance for permanence. Several novel mechanisms have shown promise in South Africa, and coalitions have formed to pursue these and develop additional funding for biodiversity outcomes.

Key question: If innovative fund raising is successful, how do we avoid substitution – allowing state agencies to reallocate their biodiversity budgets to other priorities if external contributions materialise? This is a hugely dangerous precedent and makes the survival of nature dependent only on the whim of organisations who are not necessarily responsible to the public.

7. Opportunities exist for low-cost, high-return expansion.

Although there are multiple challenges, a range of opportunities and synergies exist to expand effective protection and management of biodiversity. **Biodiversity stewardship** as an organising philosophy and well-developed set of tools plays a key role in pursuing low-cost protection and could be more explicitly supported.

Biodiversity stewardship contributes to landscape management and protected area expansion. Biodiversity stewardship is implemented on sites that have been identified as important for biodiversity and ecosystem services, based on best available science. **Biodiversity stewardship is a highly cost-effective mechanism for expanding protected areas.** Both the processes to negotiate and declare a protected area through the biodiversity stewardship model, as well as the ongoing cost of supporting the landowners to manage the biodiversity stewardship sites once they are declared, are many times less costly to the conservation authority than the cost to purchase land and manage protected areas themselves. Under biodiversity stewardship, the land remains the property of the landowner. Biodiversity stewardship is particularly effective in multiple-use landscapes where biodiversity priority areas are embedded in a matrix of other land uses. **A flexible range of biodiversity stewardship agreements is available that can combine biodiversity protection and sustainable agricultural production.** This makes biodiversity stewardship appropriate for a wide variety of landscapes, **including agricultural and communal areas.**

Numerous **existing de-facto protected areas** could be relatively quickly and easily **regularised** and recognised in the country's Protected Area Register. There would be slightly different processes for state land, restituted land, and private land, but a common thread of clear delineation, formal vesting, effective protection or declaration, and management plan negotiation and implementation. A clear regulation on NEMPAA declaration processes could clear up bureaucratic challenges. This must be a key area of action in any revised GBF Implementation Plan and a revised NPAES.

Many rural **communal land holders aspire** to include their own protected areas, and the potential income streams and values from them, into their holdings. Working examples exist in several provinces and could be scaled up with the right level of support and access to investment and partners.

In marine terms, synergies with other processes need to be explored, such as strict biodiversity zones planned in terms of Marine Spatial Planning and their potential role in OECMs including locally managed marine areas that are part of a co-management approach.

Regulatory tools authorising environmental impacts could more effectively leverage greater investment from applicants in setting aside, declaring and managing worthy sites. This is being tentatively trialled using biodiversity offsets and ecological compensation in Environmental Authorisations, Forest Act Licences, and provincial permits, but outcomes could be greatly scaled and better targeted to PA expansion priorities. Training of specialists, EAPs and case officers/decision making officials would be an essential departure point to realise gains.

De-risking the roll out of renewable energy is another way to advance the GBF agenda while also enabling the just transition. **Proactively offsetting** predictable unavoidable impacts from wind, solar and other new developments could see a huge contribution to an ecological life support system for South Africa – a relatively little incremental cost. Indeed, improving regulatory certainty, focus resources and attention on priority focus areas, creating livelihoods offering nature-based solutions, and tapping into growing industries may reduce the costs of the energy transition. It would also legitimately absorb significant resources from the burgeoning ESG and biodiversity fund sectors. Our development trajectory can and must protect our natural capital.

The **wildlife economy** builds on South Africa's unique strengths and selling points. Large areas, mostly in private hands, are kept natural for tourism, hunting, and lifestyle interests. Finding better ways to meaningfully incorporate these areas into the conservation estate, reducing unnecessary harms or unwitting impacts on biodiversity and ecological functioning (e.g. undoing the highly dissected fencing of pocket game farms) is possible. Broadening the beneficiary base and increasing equity of all South Africans in this estate is a pressing need.

Securing catchments through increasing protection levels, greatly improved restoration and capturing dedicated management funding streams is gaining traction in several SWSAs. Avoided carbon losses, and pursuing ecologically sensible sequestration, can play a role in funding water source protection and management. An ambition to protect 50% of SWSAs would be a sound basis for securing their benefits for people, nature, and downstream economies.

Identifying where these opportunities exist, understanding obstacles and constraints, and diligently working to resolve them through dialogue and engagement is surely a theme for most activities in any Implementation Plan for target 3 of the Global Biodiversity Framework.

8. Breakaway Groups for the Workshop

To structure workshop discussions on developing an Implementation Plan for the GBF, it seems prudent to group mechanisms by major similarities in issues faced or requirements for development. Obviously, there will be overlaps, synergies and possibly other ways to group these mechanisms. *E.g.* Estuaries could be easily included in any 3 of these. Stewardship mechanisms range across all.

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For the purposes of the workshop discussions, four main breakaway groupings are proposed:

- a) **NEMPAA Protected Areas (Category 1)** – on state, communal or private land. Similar issues include verification & validation, accurate declarations, management authority identification and capacity, sustainable funding, income development, and outreach opportunities etc.
- b) **MPAs & Estuaries, including Marine OECMs.** Issues of zonation, user group management, compliance and enforcement challenges, resolving conflicts with competing economic sectors.
- c) **Mountain Catchments, SWSAs, Forest Reserves (Cat 1 & 2)** and related lands needing resolution of long-standing mandate and budget issues, improved land use control, scaled up restoration & management. This cluster includes a multitude of non-NEMPA designations without clear management responsibilities, budgetary sources etc. Active industry (Forestry) which imposes costs/threats and opportunities to expand conservation areas. Ecologically mediated risks from catchments (fire, flood & drought) impose significant economic and direct financial costs on downstream societies and industries. Long-term labour-intensive restoration, dedicated capacity and management funding is required, although formal fiscal mechanisms have proven elusive. Novel mechanisms linked to water levies, licence-to-operate charges and direct investments show promise.
- d) **OECMs, and non-PA stewardship mechanisms (Cat 2).** This cluster incorporates the suite of tools to conserve large landscapes, improve outcomes for critically endangered ecosystems, and explicitly cater for targeted threat reduction and biodiversity-compatible industries' contribution to target 3. Focus is on encouraging compatible industry, improved land use control, and not tight management control as in formal PAs.

For each of these groups of mechanisms, a range of cross cutting considerations will need to be assessed. These include alignment with Ecosystem-based Adaptation opportunities, (Nature Based Solutions), biodiversity offsets and ecological compensation, as well as sustainable funding regimes.

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Table 1. Biodiversity stewardship categories

TYPE OF AGREEMENT	LEGAL MECHANISM	DESCRIPTION
BIODIVERSITY STEWARDSHIP CATEGORY 1: PROTECTED AREAS		
Nature Reserve or National Park	National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act (Act 57 of 2003)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suitable for sites with highest biodiversity importance. Binding on property: declaration of Nature Reserve, and a title deed restriction. Binding on landowner: contract with landowner usually for 99 years/in perpetuity*. Considered to be part of South Africa's protected area estate, and contributes to meeting protected area targets.
Protected Environment	National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act (Act 57 of 2003)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suitable for declaration over multiple properties. Less restrictive land use than Nature Reserve or National Park. Binding on property: declaration of Protected Environment. Optional title deed restriction. Binding on landowner. Considered to be part of South Africa's protected area estate, and contributes to meeting protected area targets.
BIODIVERSITY STEWARDSHIP CATEGORY 2: CONSERVATION AREAS		
Biodiversity Management Agreement	National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act (Act 10 of 2004)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less restrictive than protected area declaration. Must have a Biodiversity Management Plan (in terms of Biodiversity Act) on all/part of the property. Binding on landowner: contract with landowner for a minimum of 5 years, or longer in 5 year increments.
Biodiversity Agreement	Contract law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less restrictive than protected area declaration. Binding on landowner: contract with landowner for a minimum of 5 years or longer.
Conservation Servitude	Property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less restrictive than protected area declaration. Binding on landowner: notarial deed registered at the Deeds Registry for a minimum of 99 years or in perpetuity. Binding on successor in title. Provides management conditions particular to the area in question.
Business, Industry and Biodiversity initiatives		<p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conservation Champions Programme. Water Stewards. Sustainable Farming.
Conservation agreements		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offers direct incentives for conservation through a negotiated benefit package in return for conservation actions by communities. Signed for a 3-year duration (with the option for renewal).
BIODIVERSITY STEWARDSHIP CATEGORY 3: PARTNERSHIP AREAS		
<p>This is an informal category of biodiversity stewardship which involves a registration of a site within this category by the provincial conservation authority or conservation NGO.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No legal certainty, duration and intent. Involves collective action by landowners or communities. Biodiversity conservation management benefits without formal agreements or accountability. Registration of mechanisms is advised. 		<p>Examples of such include (but are not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conservancies. Buffer Zones and Transition Zones of Biosphere Reserves. Sites of Conservation Significance. Community conservation areas.
* Eligibility for tax incentives requires a minimum of a 99 year or in perpetuity title deed restrictions.		

Increasing biodiversity importance

Increasing support from conservation authority

Increasing commitment to conservation

Figure 2. The various categories of stewardship and their relation to legislative provision, level of importance, sector effort investment and commitment to biodiversity outcomes.