



C.A.P.E.

TAKING STEWARDSHIP TO THE LANDSCAPE IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE PEOPLE

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ABSTRACT

Past **stewardship programs** have for numerous reasons had limited long term success in securing priority threatened habitats for long term conservation. A **new approach** to stewardship is required to ensure long term security and appropriate management of stewardship sites, particularly those in **priority-threatened habitats and systems**.

The Western Cape Nature Conservation Board is developing a simple but effective stewardship program, which will significantly expand the **protected area network** across the **landscape** (including all biomes in the Western Cape).

Site security and appropriate management (for diversity, pattern and process) are essential for the long-term survival of threatened habitats. A suite of stewardship options, which ensure long term security and provide a stable platform for the **conservation of landscapes** and achievement of **sustainable land management** (aligned with imminent legislation) will be implemented.

The security of these stewardship sites and their management integrity will be encouraged by the use of **strong partnerships, incentives** and an **efficient** and professional **extension service**.

It is envisaged that the new stewardship approach will significantly contribute to the conservation of critical environmental pattern and process at landscape scale.

This will enable conservation to contribute to the viable social, ecological and economic systems as a function of living landscape.

INTRODUCTION

The Western Cape has world-renowned levels of biodiversity. The Cape Floral Kingdom is an epicenter for diversity and endemism, while the adjacent succulent Karoo and the Sub-Tropical Thicket Biomes, are regarded as biodiversity hotspots of global significance.

As a result of high levels of landscape transformation, alien invasion and inappropriate development, many of the richest habitats are under threat.

Three GEF funded bio-regional planning and strategy development processes have recently been initiated. These have resulted in Action plans, which identify threats and recommend strategies to achieve conservation and sustainable development goals in the next 20 years.

To achieve adequate representation of this globally significant biodiversity through a network of protected areas which will adequately conserve natural pattern and process as well as meet South Africa's international obligations, there is a need for a substantial increase in areas set aside for conservation.

Landscape scale conservation intervention requires unique and multi-functional capacity and competence. The role of private landowners in conservation at this scale is significant. Recent surveys have shown that landowner willingness to set aside and manage these areas is not an obstacle to the conservation of privately owned priority habitat.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Years of experience and recent research have indicated that poor co-ordination, lack of understanding of options and limited conservation management skills are inhibiting the effective conservation of privately owned priority habitat. Other key factors preventing successful stewardship are limited civil and agency capacity and experience as well as poorly developed institutional mechanisms.

With most of the priority habitat consisting of fragments in private ownership and a dearth of funds to acquire land for statutory reserves, stewardship agreements with landowners are set to become significant conservation mechanisms.

WESTERN CAPE NATURE CONSERVATION BOARD

WCNCB is the primary conservation agency mandated to conserve the rich natural heritage of the Western Cape, both within and outside of their formal reserves. The WCNCB has an established history of commitment to off-reserve conservation and has pioneered conservation initiatives on private land including private nature reserves, community reserves and conservancies amongst others.

WCNCB is further showing commitment to taking on modern conservation challenges by restructuring and re-aligning their objectives and strategies in order to achieve critical biodiversity targets. Many of these targets have been recommended by the GEF funded planning and strategy implementation processes (there is currently ± US\$ 25 million secured for the next 7 years for implementation of these strategies).

The Stewardship and Incentives Program emerged and in partnership with the Botanical Society of South Africa, is currently developing mechanisms for conservation stewardship in the province. The program essentially provides support to the operational component of the Board for implementation of biodiversity conservation in the landscape.

GOALS OBJECTIVES AND DELIVERABLES

The goal of the Stewardship Program is for conservation and intervention efforts to focus on strategic partnerships with, and empowerment of civil society and the development and use of co-operative management models and incentive schemes. This is to ensure that private and

communal land contribute to the establishment of biodiversity corridors. These corridors should link large habitat parcels through landscape gradients across wide geographic areas, while at the same time also conserving vital lowland habitat remnants.

The primary objectives of the project leading team are:

- ❑ develop strategic partnerships with key stakeholders to coordinate activities and to establish and maintain a support framework;
- ❑ develop a well capacitated Stewardship Action Team (SAT) to deliver in a sustainable fashion , stewardship and incentives to private conservation initiatives in priority areas;
- ❑ develop and use appropriate co-operative management models and stewardship schemes to promote private conservation initiatives and empowerment of civil society;
- ❑ select critical areas for the establishment of pilot projects to develop, demonstrate and refine co-operative management models and stewardship schemes; and
- ❑ develop and populate a private and communal co-operative management and incentives database.

Deliverables:

1. MOA between the Botanical Society and the WCNCB (as lead partners).
2. Strategic partnership agreement documents.
3. Well capacitated SAT.
4. Training strategy.
5. Stewardship and Incentives application procedure manual.
- 4 Land management skills manual and fact sheets.
6. Auditing protocols and audit reports.
7. Co-operative management and incentives mechanisms.
8. Suite of co-operative management models with stewardship and incentive schemes. .
9. Policy and legislative reform position papers.
10. Priority areas selected for the establishment of pilot projects.
11. Database

INTERVENTIONS AT LANDSCAPE SCALE

Stewardship strategies are those strategies which either set aside land for conservation or utilise the land sustainably. There are currently in excess of 20 strategies available, each with their own characteristics, status and condition.

WCNCB will be using three strategies (a much simpler set of options for landowners) which make provision for benefits for the landowner and security of priority sites for conservation.

Stewardship strategies:

**Conservation Area
(Biodiversity Management) Co-operative Agreement
Contract Nature Reserve**

The table below provides an explanation of how these options contribute to conservation stewardship in the landscape.

1. All options are entered into voluntarily
2. Each option is tailored to the specific needs of the owner and property
3. By adopting an option, you do not cede ownership rights to Cape Nature Conservation
4. Existing protected area types (e.g. private nature reserve, natural heritage site, mountain catchment area) can be accommodated within any of these options

Option	Where Applicable	Possible landuse limitations	Benefits to the landowner
Conservation Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any natural land is suitable but not a good option if your land has rare or endangered habitats or is an important ecosystem. Unless this initial designation is seen as part of a plan to progress to higher conservation security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very few, but the area needs to retain its natural character 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advice & support through basic extension services Assistance with management plans & farm maps
Co-operation Agreements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suitable for any conservation worthy land (especially wetlands and water catchments), not excluding small and isolated fragments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land must be managed for biodiversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific agreements for fire, alien, plant and animal management Advanced extension services (e.g. alien clearing planning)
Contract Nature Reserves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Priority areas adjacent to statutory reserves or sufficiently large to be self-contained ecosystems. Critically important and threatened sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No development or land use rights will be permitted, but access and residence rights will not be restricted in any way. Owners retain title 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Substantial assistance with habitat management Increased recognition and marketing exposure We will lobby on your behalf for incentives (e.g. rates rebates)

FINE SCALE PLANNING

Spatial development frameworks (SDF's) which form the basis of land use decision making should include fine scale planning which allows for the functioning of ecological processes across relevant gradients.

The stewardship program is currently supporting the operational component of WCNCB to entrench these corridors and gradients in the relevant SDF's across the province. This is however a major undertaking and is only being made possible through institutional partnerships with role players such as the Botanical Society of S.A, Western Cape Provincial Dept of Agriculture and the local authorities,

This also requires focussed and strategic interventions of conservation services (extension) officers in priority habitats and the critical linkages between these habitat parcels. Fine scale planning is currently underway and spatial and non-spatial information on priority areas and biodiversity targets, are centrally stored in the Conservation Planning Unit; a web based resource for managers, land use planners and developers funded through the CAPE program.

MANAGEMENT OF STEWARDSHIP SITES

Stewardship is only as good as the management of that site, in spite of any legal or contractual status it might have.

As part of the stewardship agreement and in order to qualify for relevant incentives, stewardship sites will be managed according to an agreed management plan, the implementation of which is subject to regular audit.

The conservation service (extension) support is essential for the development of conservation management capacity in stewardship areas. The development of a conservation service and the extension personnel as a career in conservation agencies is essential in order to sustain stewardship so as to achieve the biodiversity conservation targets. Experienced and professional extension officers are important catalysts and the key to effective stewardship site management.

The development of a landowner or stewardship site management procedure manual for the Western Cape is advanced and will contribute significantly to the capacity of civil society's understanding and management of stewardship sites.

SUSTAINABILITY

There is a number of supporting initiatives, which contribute to successful stewardship being rolled out in the landscape. These include the testing of several options in the land consolidation process initiated by SANParks on the Cape Peninsular, Fine Scale Planning Projects in the lowlands, run by the Botanical Society of SA and Provincial Department of Agriculture's Area Wide Planning Initiatives. Working for Water and Working on Fire programs have endorsed this approach and have so far offered in principal support.

Critical momentum is essential to ensure that the rollout of stewardship is maintained. Ongoing extension support from a range of statutory agencies (DWAF, Dept of Agriculture) and civil society. Collaborative agreements and co-operation on the ground with extension officers from these agencies and civil society is being facilitated in pilot areas.

It is evident that these extension personnel are most effective when they live and work in the communities they aim to serve. Long-term local support, which is essential for successful stewardship, will be most effectively generated through a community-based approach.

KEY SUCCESS FACTORS

A number of factors contribute to successful conservation stewardship.

Amongst them are:

- Quality of extension and project staff
- Project support at all levels
- Strategic approach - focus on biodiversity targets and threat abatement.
- An interactive and adaptive style of management allows the evaluation and testing of interventions in order to make strategic adjustments.
- Adequate funding; the GEF funded bioregional planning and conservation implementation programs have provided a good foundation for new and innovative mechanisms.
- Growing community buy-in and collaboration
- Sound Conservation planning

A good understanding of the natural systems and their requirements in order to sustain the natural biodiversity of the region.

Understanding the stresses (and their sources) on the natural systems will ensure the formulation of effective strategies.

The strategy of working with partners and communities in order to help, encourage and reward landowners or managers who contribute to the security and appropriate management of critical habitat.

Building on success and focussing on being successful on sites which have a multiplier effect also contributes to the attainment of critical momentum of stewardship in the landscape.

CONCLUSION

Landowners play a pivotal role in conservation. With 80% of the priority conservation areas in private hands, conservation strategies must involve private and communal landholders. In addition the existing network of formal reserves cannot adequately protect the many threatened species and ecosystems in South Africa. This means that landowners can make a significant contribution towards the conservation of the unrivalled biodiversity of our country.

Innovative approaches are required that will enable, encourage and assist landowners to protect priority habitats.

The Western Cape Nature Conservation Board is setting aside substantial resources for the implementation of Stewardship in the landscape. The challenge of keeping people on these living landscapes will be met through extending the reach and quality of biodiversity management, the repositioning of biodiversity in local economic development and the development of human capital and partnerships.

The Western Cape Nature Conservation Board believes this investment in resources will provide significant return in the form of the most cost effective and long term solution to reaching critical biodiversity targets in order for the most threatened habitats to persist in the landscape. Essential and valuable ecosystem services which contribute to the stability of the natural environment and other landscape and process benefits are gained by the people living in these landscapes. An added bonus is the realisation of provincial and national conservation responsibilities with buy in at local level at very little cost to the state.